George Washington National Forest

A History

Forest Service

Southern Region

United States Department of Agriculture

Executive Order

George Washington National Forest

Virginia and West Virginia

In order to avoid the confusion arising from the fact that there is a national park and a national forest in the State of Virginia bearing the same name, that is "Shenandoah," it is hereby ordered that the name of the "Shenandoah National Forest," as defined by proclamation of January 28, 1927 (44 Stat. 2633–2634), be changed to "George Washington National Forest" in honor of George Washington, first President of the United States.

HERBERT HOOVER

The White House,
June 28, 1932.

[No. 5867]

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George Washington National Forest

A History

Text and design by Jean L. Satterthwaite, public affairs specialist in Supervisor's Office from October 1989 until May 1991.

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Forest Service Southern Region

United States Department of Agriculture

Celebrate

100 Years of Conservation

This history of the George Washington National Forest provides the chance to stop and think about what the National Forest System has provided for the people of Virginia and West Virginia.

This forest is proud to participate in the 100th anniversary of the formation of the National Forest System.

Land was not purchased here in the east until 20 years after the Forest Reserve Act of March 3, 1891. But the vision of the early conservationists clearly guided the efforts here to buy and protect land in the Appalachians.

In May 1917 the forest was organized under the name Shenandoah National Forest. Our name was changed in 1932 to the George Washington National Forest to avoid confusion with the newly formed Shenandoah National Park.

Since the early days, we have been growing, not only in size, but in our commitment to use our natural resources in the wisest way possible.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

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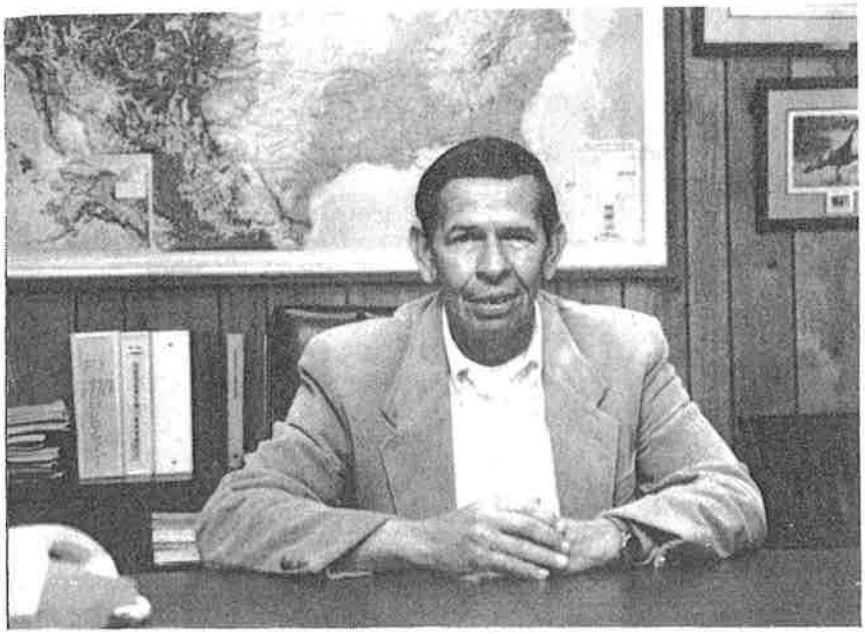


George Wayne Kelley

As I reviewed the draft of this document, it reminded me that all too often, in the rush of today's work, we forget to reflect on the past.

Maybe Alex Haley, author of "Roots" had a real message for all of us. I took note of the title of Chapter I: "Roots of the Forest Service." The material I read in later chapters addressed the roots of the George Washington National Forest. Then I got to the list of the district rangers and forest supervisors on these public lands. Those listed only represent a very small portion of the thousands who have worked to make the George Washington a national treasure.

With the above in mind, I will attempt to secure the resources of support to expand the history of the Forest's roots. Such an effort will obviously require research that includes various records available and interviews with those that left such a strong foundation on which to build.

In reality, the future really rests on what we have learned from the past.

1

Roots of the Forest Service

The George Washington National Forest has its seed in the early years of the conservation movement in the U.S. As the forest reaches toward its ninth decade, it must deal with with an environmental movement that, at times, supports its conservationist past and, at other points, challenges its very principles.

The environmental issues faced today are every bit as difficult as the ones faced by the pioneers of American forestry. The early conservationist saw whole mountain sides denuded of trees, rivers clogged with silt and a general lack of public understanding.

"The stand of timber, still standing after the century and a half of constant inroads into the forest, was being rapidly reduced to an area of wasteland."

H.M. Sears
Forest Supervisor

Miners, timber operators and hunters pushed animal species like elk, white-tailed deer and wild turkey to the brink of extinction here. Some species have never recovered.

Today these issues have been supplemented by global warming, ozone depletion and acid rain. As wildlife biologists and botanists work on identifying and studying existing species, a realization is growing that the George Washington National Forest protects species that are found no where else.

From the beginning, this forest has tried to handle environmental issues from a conservationist perspective.

This perspective, developed by the early leaders of forestry, teaches that natural resources must be used in a way that meets current needs and also provides for the future. A conservationist would say that decisions must be made to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Two different 17th and 18th century viewpoints led toward this concept. One is preservation and the other is utility.

The key figures for the preservation movement were Henry Thoreau, a colonial-era essayist, and John Muir, a naturalist and founder of the Sierra Club. They believed that nature and its beauty had intrinsic value and should be preserved undisturbed by man. The first national park -- Yellowstone, created in 1872 -- is an outgrowth of this idea.[1]

The conservation movement was more closely tied to a later idea known as enlightened utilitarianism. Phrases such as "the greatest good for the greatest number" come directly out of the writings of utilitarian philosophers.[2]

An early champion of the conservationist movement was Gifford Pinchot, who was to become the first chief of the Forest Service.[3]

In his "A Primer of Forestry" written in 1911, Pinchot wrote: "No one can really know the forest without feeling the gentle influences of one of the kindliest and strongest parts of nature. From every point of view it is one of the most helpful friends of man. Perhaps no other natural agent has done so much for the human race and has been recklessly used and so little understood."[4]

Footnotes are on pages 45-52

Many before Pinchot recognized that natural resources were endangered by promiscuous expansion and exploitation. In the late 1800s, a small group of what he called forest reformers, saw that "the destruction of public timber was public enemy number one."[5]

Several attempts were made to introduce bills in Congress that would offer protection for the nation's forests. In 1891, the Forest Reserve Act, which Pinchot called "the most important legislation in the history of Forestry in America,"[6] was passed with neither debate nor question.

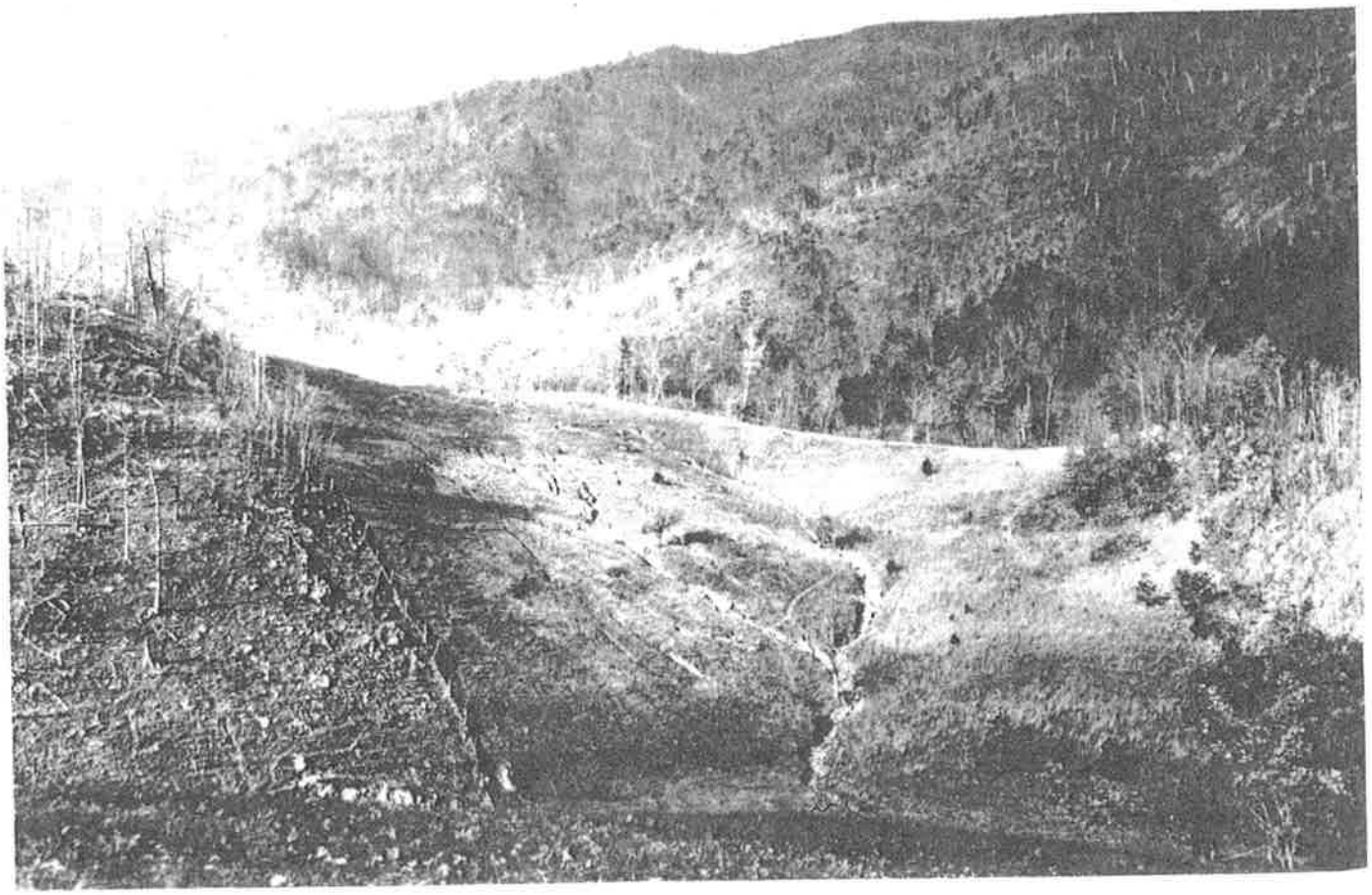
It authorized the creation of Forest Reserves, the forerunner of what was to become the National Forest system.[7] That is why 1991 is celebrated as the Centennial Year.

The Forest Reserves in the west were created out of public domain. Here in the east, very little of this public domain was left. Lands in private ownership were often badly mishandled leading to destroyed forests, soils and watersheds.

H.M. Sears, forest supervisor for the Natural Bridge National Forest which was later split between the George Washington and Jefferson national forests, wrote: "The stand of timber, still standing after the century and a half of constant inroads into the forest, was being rapidly reduced to an area of wasteland ... Tanneries, paper mills, and dye plants poured out their poison waters into the streams ... A few scattered bodies of timber, large areas of short, fire stunted brush, black, fire tortured snags, weather-white ghosts of the forest, stood on the bleak, desolate, ridge tops and slopes, as a pitiful, battle-scarred fragment of the glory that was once a virgin forest."[8]

The damage to the mountains extended to the waterways. One early forest examiner in Virginia wrote in 1912: "The removal of the timber and the repeated

Below: Early lumber companies stripped the trees off the mountains leaving the soil unprotected. Erosion problems developed along with heavy silt deposits in the streams and rivers.



Timber was plentiful in the mountains of Virginia. It first attracted lumber companies that exploited the wealth and was later taken over by the USDA Forest Service to ensure an on-going healthy forest.

burnings have materially affected the stream flow. Farmers living near the tract say that during the wet seasons the streams are much higher, and floods are more numerous than they were 15 to 20 years ago ... .[9]

This damage to the watersheds led to the creation of the Act of March 1, 1911 -- most commonly known as the Weeks Act. This act helped solve two problems: it allowed land to be purchased which at that time was currently under private ownership; it also gave the government the authority to acquire land specifically for the purpose of watershed protection.[10]

At first watershed protection limited the scope of the law to tracts that specifically fed major water sources.[11]

Just 26 days after the act was approved, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson issued a statement about the Weeks Act and described 13 areas in the Southern Appalachians and the White Mountains that the government would first consider for purchase.

Among the tracts were three that would eventually become part of the George Washington National Forest: the Potomac Purchase Unit with 478,717 acres, the Massanutten Mountain unit with 152,946 acres and the Natural Bridge with 106,564 acres.[12]

A glance at the past

Virginia or West Virginia?

Much of the history of the George Washington National Forest takes place in Virginia. But that should not discount the very real role that West Virginia has played in the development of the Forest Service in the east.

At least five different national forests have at one time or another had land in Virginia or West Virginia and some of that land has switched back and forth between forests, crossing state lines.

These forests have included the Unaka, Jefferson, Natural Bridge, George Washington and the Monongahela national forests.

Most pertinent to this history, and to the development of forests in Virginia and West Virginia, have been the Monongahela and George Washington.

From the very beginning, when land was first acquired to form the George Washington, this forest has held land in West Virginia.

Initially this would have been in the area that formed the Potomac Purchase Unit. That area later became the Lost River Ranger District and then the present-day Lee Ranger District.

The George Washington also spills over into West Virginia in its Warm Springs and Dry River districts.

In total, the George Washington had over 104,000 acres in West Virginia in 1990.

The Monongahela National Forest has sometimes moved in the opposite direction: although it is primarily located in West Virginia, it has had land in Virginia.

The largest amount would have been in the 1930s. In 1932 the Monongahela managed over 10,000 acres of land in Virginia. By 1936, no land in Virginia is recorded as part of the Monongahela.

Presumably, land that had been in the Monongahela was used to help form the Warm Springs District in the George Washington.

Because this forest has had land in both states for so long, it has been able to develop a rich history in dealing with government agencies in both states.

For example, the George Washington National Forest regularly deals with both the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as well as the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

The forest also deals with both states' forestry agencies and the Virginia and West Virginia Heritage programs.

2

Dawn of the Forest Service in Virginia

Long before any thought had been given to forest reserves in this country, long before white man had settled here, the forests of Virginia were sustaining a culture.

Shenandoah -- daughter of the stars -- was a name given to the river and valley by Native Americans who once passed back and forth through the bottom lands. The Sioux, Shawnees, Delawares, Catawbas and Tuscaroras all had their time here hunting, harvesting and coming through on raiding parties.[1]

In passing, they left their influence which is still seen in the names around the Shenandoah today.

Later, a few trading posts were established in the northern part of the valley and along the James River. In 1716, Governor Alexander Spottswood began to explore the area in an attempt to find a shortcut to the great lakes.

Eventually news of the valley's richness reached others and settlers, particularly of Scotch-Irish and German heritage, began to make their homes in the Shenandoah.[2]

It was this valley, now surrounded by the George Washington National Forest, that would hold so much of this nation's history. What other forest can claim with reasonable accuracy that Thomas Fairfax, George Washington, Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee walked through its land?

It was this valley, now surrounded by the George Washington National Forest, that would hold so much of this nation's history. What other forest can claim with reasonable accuracy that Thomas Fairfax, George Washington, Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee walked through its land?

What other forest contains land that was part of the "breadbasket of the Confederacy" or had iron furnaces where cannonballs were made for the southern armies?[3]

A record of this history was also scratched into the earth. Settlers often viewed the forests as land that had to be cleared for more fields. Industries carved their own specialized mark.

Three major factors greatly influenced the condition of the land that the Forest Service eventually inherited: farming, mining and timber.

The broad, rich valley provided rich farm land. But the steep, sometimes stony slopes of the mountains were not nearly so generous. Without productive farm land, some mountain families eked out a meager existence gathering and selling berries.[4]

They also supplemented their incomes by trading honey, jams, woven and knitted goods and illegally distilled liquor. This last item became especially important all over the southern Appalachians when the tax on liquor skyrocketed after the War Between the States.[5]

When the land was farmed, little thought was given to the future utility of the soil. To clear the land for crops and cattle, and to improve berry production in the

nearby woods, mountain farmers typically cut the biggest trees and burned off the brush.[6]

Land was quickly worn out from erosion and overcultivation, in part because contour farming was virtually unknown. Rows stretched vertically up the sides of hills hastening erosion and the silting-in of mountain streams. When the soil was ruined, people simply cleared and burned more forests to open up more land.[7]

The mountain lands, even if they had been abused, were still desired by outside mining and timber interests. Cities and industries had grown rapidly after the war, creating a heavy demand for coal, timber and the tannin used in leather production.[8]

Two factors made what is now the George Washington National Forest a prime choice for these industries: first, since the 1820s, the combination of iron -- and trees to feed the iron furnaces -- made mining a profitable venture in many areas near the Shenandoah Valley.[9]

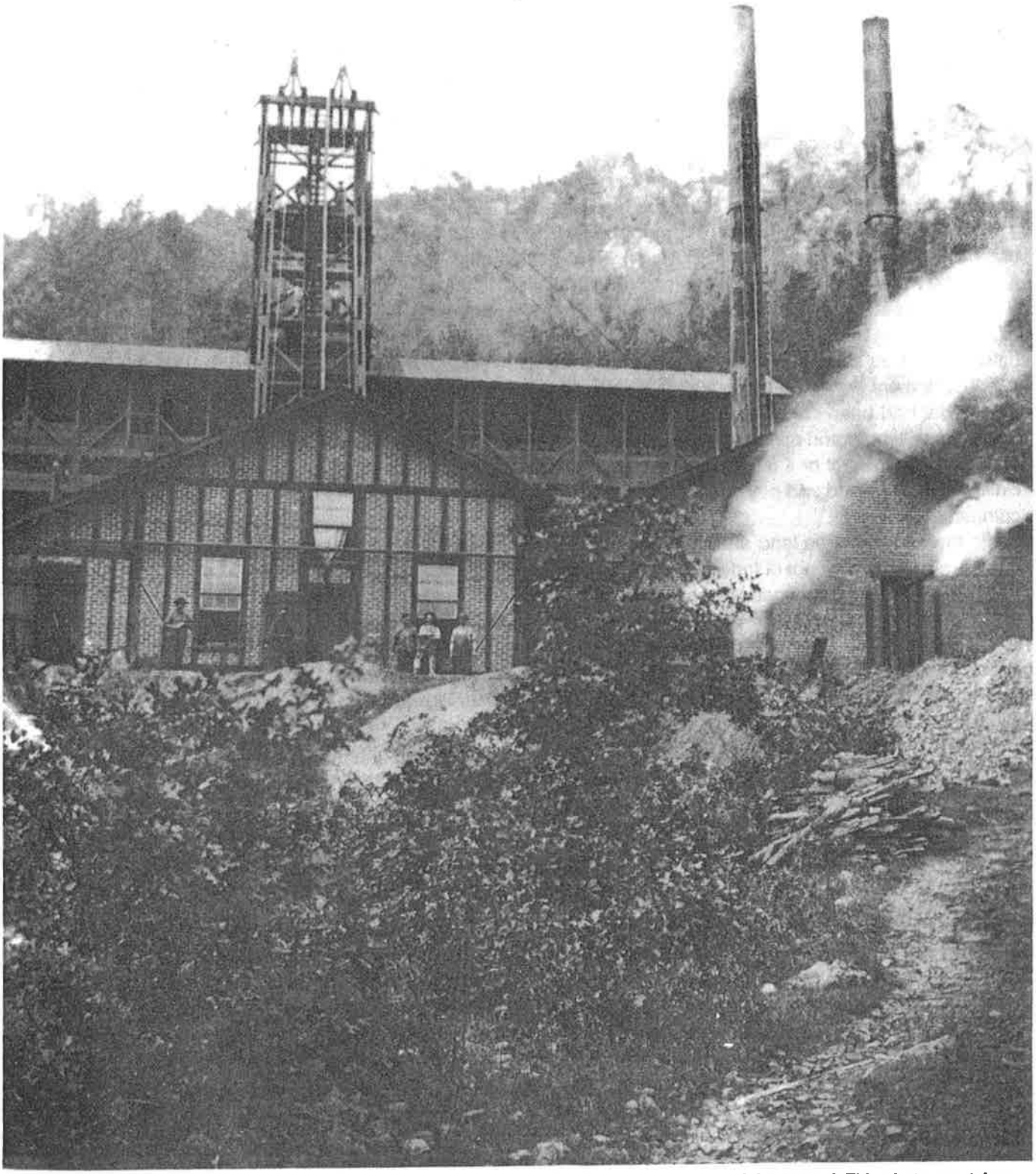
Also, by the mid-1800s, the advent of the railroad made industry tremendously more mobile. Better transportation hastened the inroads timber and mining companies made into the mountains.[10]

These companies brought devastation to the land. Repeated cuttings cleared the mountains, erosion caused streams to become clogged with silt and floods came more frequently and with greater damage.[11]

Perhaps the most insidious effect of industry was fire, which burned repeatedly over the mountains.

In the Massanutten range, where many areas had been stripped of trees between 1850 and 1880, fire after fire burned over what little was left. Many of the

Below: Fire after fire burned over the heavily lumbered mountainsides before the Forest Service began to administer the land.



Longdale Mines was just one of many operations that brought up the rich iron stores out of the ground. This photo was taken around 1888.

remaining trees were killed and young sprouts had a tough time growing in such an inhospitable environment.

In one area in the Massanuttens, as much as 60 percent of trees were dead, probably as a result of fire.[12]

"It is very probable," E. H. Frothingham wrote in his 1917 study of this land, "that the productive capacity of forest soils throughout most of this region has been greatly decreased by repeated fires, so that the present forest growth is poorer in composition and quality than it once was."[13]

In one stand alone, Frothingham noted fires in 1887, 1897, 1904, 1906 and 1912.[14]

In addition to the land suffering because of industry, the Appalachian people had to endure serious loss from the influx of mining and logging interests.

Because industrial growth was primarily the result of non-local investors, most of the profits were sent outside of the region, leaving the mountain people poor.[15] Even land ownership did not protect many mountain families.

Timber speculators frequently traveled through the southern Appalachians offering cash on the spot for a farm. The mountain people lived difficult lives and hard money was scarce: the offers seemed impossible to refuse.

The farmers ended up without land, displaced and with little to show for the wealth that had been contained on their property.[16]

At times, timber and mining companies resorted to outright theft. If the boundary lines were inexact or if a title was missing, a company merely had to make a claim, survey the land and pay a fee to the state. The land then "belonged" to the company.[17]

In the end, both the land and the mountain people lost out. Both presented challenges as the concept of federal landownership began to develop in the east.

Throughout the first decade of the 20th century, nearly 50 bills were presented to Congress to authorize land purchases in the southern Appalachians.

At first, opposition was strong. Many congressmen were concerned that federal land purchases would interfere with state rights. This was overcome when the legislatures of six southern states passed bills authorizing federal land acquisitions.[18]

When linked to the power of Congress to regulate interstate commerce -- which was being affected by the Appalachian's ruined waterways -- the way was opened up for passage of the Weeks Act.[19]

Land in what was to become the George Washington was among the first considered for acquisition. The first purchase was made in the Massanutten Purchase Unit. Just over 385 acres were bought June 27, 1912, from H.H. Rust of Page County.[20]

Even Theodore Roosevelt's name came up in early land acquisitions here. His sister married Douglas Robinson, owner of Douglas Land Co. One of the forest's first purchases included some of this company's land.[21]

As the Forest Service acquired land in northwestern Virginia and eastern West Virginia, four purchase units were organized. These outlined the areas where land could be obtained. Their top administrators were called "forest examiners in charge."

The headquarters for the Shenandoah was in Harrisonburg, Va., the same town where the George Washington National Forest Supervisor's Office is now. The Potomac and Massanutten were both administered from Woodstock, Va., and the Natural Bridge office was in Buena Vista, Va.[22]

A brief description of the Potomac and Massanutten office was preserved in

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of establishing fire protection was developing a fire warden system. According to Helen W. Gordon, the warden system was invented here, then used throughout the eastern and southern forests.

writings by Helen W. Gordon, the secretary in that office. She was later transferred to Harrisonburg when the Shenandoah National Forest was formed.

She wrote about E. D. Clark, forest examiner in charge: "[He] was a man small in stature, but of inexhaustible energy. From early morning until far into the night he gave the best of his mind and heart to the business of bringing the gospel of forest conservation to an untutored public."[23]

She described the office, which in her words was to "uphold the dignity of our mighty government," as a small, two-room facility with an entrance directly from the street.

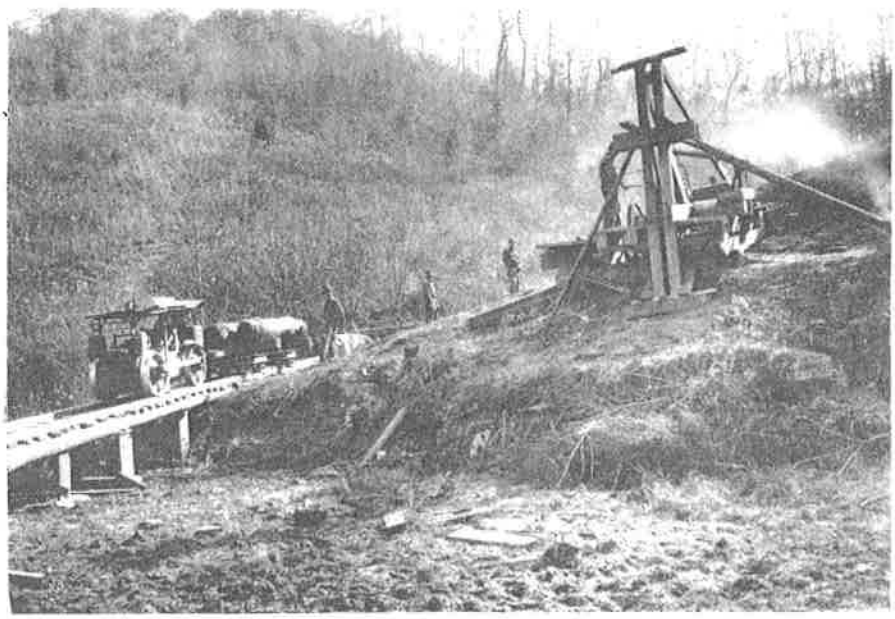
Clark's office "was not so large, but for antiques and dust it could be put up against anything this side of the Sahara Desert. Here Mr. Clark had his private sanctum, and woe be unto he who disturbed even a hair of its disarray."[24]

The new administrators had a tough job reestablishing order to the land now placed under federal ownership. Not only had mining and timber companies exploited the land, those who had practiced sound silverculture often abandoned their efforts when they found out that the Forest Service would purchase their land anyway.[25]

How did the mountain people view these federal land purchases? To them, the presence of the Forest Service may have represented yet another form of outside landownership that would diminish their lives. An almost wild-west attitude pervaded. Sometimes local individuals resorted to outright sabotage by burning land purchased by the federal government.[26]

"I have noticed several remarks here regarding the independent, willful and malicious men of the mountain sections who propose to burn you out, or do some other awful damage if they are not allowed to have their own way, who seem to have some foresters on the run," said W. W. Hurt during discussions at the Forestry Congress in Asheville, N.C., in 1916. "Just how much are we going to put up with from these fellows who make threats to do awful things to us?"[27]

Up through the early part of the 1920s, forestry officials estimated that 94 percent of the fires in the southern end of what is now the George Washington were caused by man.[28]



A turn-of-the-century timber operation brings lumber down off a mountain.

Much of the early efforts by the forest examiners and their staff involved bringing this fire situation under control.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of establishing fire protection was developing a fire warden system. According to Helen W. Gordon, the warden system was invented here, then used throughout the eastern and southern forests.[29]

The Forest Service appointed one man to be in charge of a small area of the forest. This warden chose his crew of up to 20 other locals. When fires were spotted, these crews were quickly dispatched.[30]

A basic form of fire detection and suppression was established that would remain in place until well after World War II.

A glance at the past

Early Communication

From bears playing with coils of wire to a Forest Service political coup, early telephone service provided a challenge to the people establishing the George Washington National Forest.

The telephone was just coming into common use here when the Forest Service came to western Virginia in the 1910s to acquire land.

Beyond day-to-day forest business, reliable telephone service was crucial for fire detection and prevention. Practically none of the local fire wardens owned phones and without them, valuable time would be lost in dispatching crews to fires.

Officials in the old Farmers Mutual Telephone System in Edinburg were suspicious of federal land acquisitions, according to a paper about the fire warden system written by Helen W. Gordon in 1929.

Those in charge of the telephone system apparently believed that the federal government would take over phone lines without paying for either the lines or the switchboard service.

The Forest Service was not allowed to connect with the system lines and was charged fees so high that they virtually prohibited use of the telephone system.

To counter, E.D. Clark, forest examiner in charge, worked to get a coworker elected president of the telephone system. On March 2, 1915, M.A. Price was elected.

From that date Farmers Mutual, which was the forerunner of Shenandoah Telephone Co., worked closely with the Forest Service. The forest was able to tie its lines into the system and use the company's switchboard.

Warren B. French Jr., president of the company for many years, said that many of the Forest Service lines were still in operation when he joined the company in 1954.

The lines were turned over to the company over the years. Shenandoah Telephone Company still provides service to the Lee Ranger District office in Edinburg.

While the Forest Service worked out the politics of dealing with local telephone companies, physical difficulties remained during the early years in running telephone lines to fire lookout towers in high, remote areas.

While workmen were building a telephone line to the Hardscrabble lookout tower, they left a coil of wire loosely tied at the work site. During the night, a playful bear got mixed up in the wire and dragged it all over the mountain.

It was so badly kinked and damaged that it was no longer fit for telephone wire, according to S. H. Marsh, the forest's first supervisor.

Despite the cantankerous telephone companies, remote lookout towers and bears, a communications system was developed. A 1926 telephone company publication reported that virtually all fire towers were linked with telephone lines by the mid-1920s.

3

The Early Years

When did the George Washington National Forest get started?

The best answer is 1917 when the acting regional forester ordered the three northern Virginia purchase units to combine into one forest.

"You were informed ... that we have been seriously considering combining the Shenandoah, Potomac and Massanutten areas as one unit under your direction, with headquarters at Harrisonburg," Acting Regional Forester William L. Hall wrote to S. H. Marsh in an April 16, 1917 letter.

"A recommendation involving this proposed change has been approved by the acting forester, effective May 1, and the new unit will be known as the Shenandoah National Forest ..."[1] That forest was later renamed the George Washington.

Another forest supervisor confirmed the 1917 date. J.W. McNair in April 1932 wrote: "...the three units were combined in 1917 and 'Hank' was placed in charge of the new forest. He builded well and wisely with the result that the area of acquired land is now over 450,000 acres."[2]

Some confusion has developed regarding this start-up date. The reason? The executive order from the president recognizing the change was not signed until 1918.[3]

But instructions for combining the offices called for the change to be made rapidly. So rapidly that some employees were told April 16 that they were to report to work in a different city by April 25. And all property was to be under the administration of the new National Forest by May 1, 1917.[4]

No record exists in the current forest files of any similar correspondence for the Natural Bridge National Forest. A history of the Forest Service in the Appalachians states that that forest was created in 1918.[5]

Land for these forests, which would later be combined to form the George Washington National Forest, was acquired by the authority of the Weeks Act. In order to be considered the land had to have a direct impact on a watershed.[6]

The Weeks law did not give authority to acquire land only for timber production nor did it give more than rudimentary authority for the Forest Service to assist states in their forestry efforts.[7]

The Clark-McNary Act of 1924 made two changes in the Weeks Law. First, the act authorized financial assistance that helped many states organize forestry organizations.

Second, it extended the authority of the Forest Service to purchase land for growing and harvesting timber.[8]

But the forest did not wait until passage of the Clark-McNary Act to begin timber work. Seeing no ambiguity in using watershed-protection land for timber production, the first timber sale was held in 1916.[9]

That sale amounted to 11.5 cords of deadwood which the Forest Service sold for the grand sum of $2.88. By 1936, 12 years after the Clark-McNary Act, the forest sold over 10 million board feet for a total of $15,345.68."[10]

Many early sales had to deal with salvage from chestnut blight. Trees throughout the east, as well as the George Washington, were killed as the blight moved through.

As much as 30 to 40 percent of the stands on drier sites in this forest had been made up by chestnut. But between 1910 and 1925, endothia parasitica virtually wiped out all of this hardwood species.[11]

When possible, the Forest Service tried to salvage timber after the blight killed the trees.

From the start both forests that would eventually form the George Washington had optimistic outlooks concerning what could be harvested in normal timber operations.

H.M. Sears, supervisor of the Natural Bridge National Forest during the 1920s, estimated the 153,000 acres on that forest could produce about 32 million board feet of timber each year.[12]

By 1936, Harold L. Borden, supervisor of the George Washington, had an eye toward sustained yield management. That is the policy where the amount of timber cut cannot exceed what can be grown in a year.

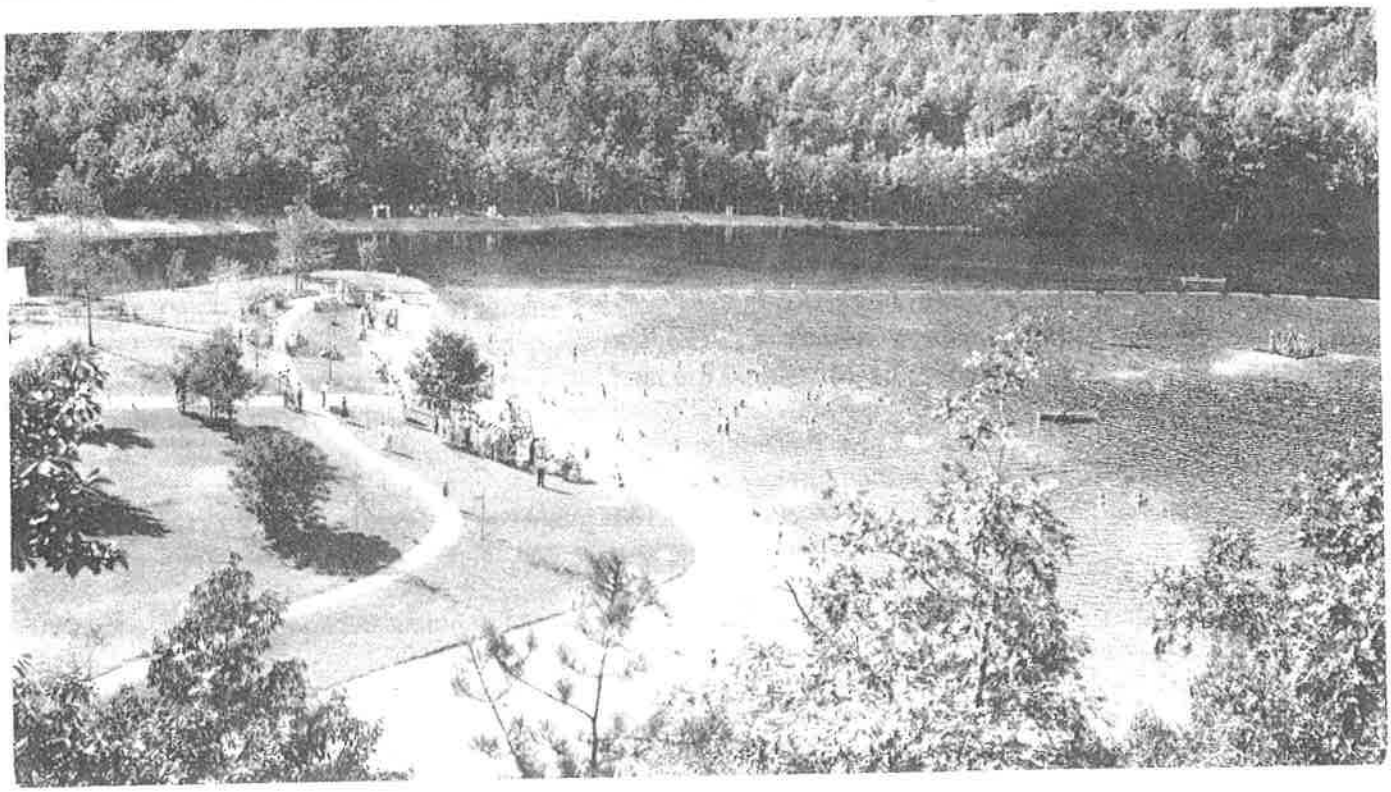
Using this restraint, he figured his forest could eventually cut as much as 50 million board feet a year.[13]

These estimates were given despite the severe damage that was still apparent in the timber, a legacy of the years prior to federal ownership.

William L. Hall, who held various Forest Service offices including assistant to the chief, described the kind of cut-burn-regrowth pattern that led to many of the damaged trees in the Appalachians.

"The vitality of a hardwood forest is very remarkable," he wrote. "The roots continue to live and after each fire sprouts reappear and grow rapidly, but if fires

The CCC helped encourage recreation development in the forest. Below: this is how the beach at Sherando Lake looked as it first opened in the summer of 1936. The CCC continued work at the site, and eventually finished stone bathhouses and other facilities.



"The Massanutten has been considered more or less a joke as far as timber is concerned ..."
J.W. McNair
Forest Supervisor

J.W. McNair
Forest Supervisor 1930-1935

succeed one another every three or four years or oftener, the young growth is continually kept down and the roots finally die, so that after many years we have a stand simply of damaged mature trees with practically no young growth."[14]

The timber on the Massanutten Purchase Unit had received so much of this abuse that it was eventually discussed with humor.

J.W. McNair, forest supervisor, wrote in 1932: "Is the Massanutten a pile of rock or a timber and revenue producing unit? The Massanutten has been considered more or less a joke so far as timber is concerned; some folks have even gone so far as to ask the ranger how he found trees large enough to post fire notices on, and having said there would have to be a special sign made for the Massanutten, as the present signs would go all the way around the tree and overlap and no one could read them."[15]

This led to a strong recommendation for a type of clearcutting even though that harvesting method did not become a nationally accepted practice on federal lands until the 1960s.[16]

As early as 1917, E. H. Frothingham in his study of Appalachian timber, recommended this kind of harvest.

"The general recommendation of total clearing (except for carefully chosen seed trees and reserves) is therefore the more important result of the study. It is confidently believed that this and other procedures outlined will, if followed, make a good beginning possible, and that complete success in forest management cannot be secured with anything less."[17]

With an eye toward giving the forest the best start possible, and perhaps as an early forerunner of the sustained-yield idea, the forest early on started planting trees.

The Forest Service planted its first trees here in April 1926. Under the direction of Forest Supervisor S. H. Marsh, about 20 acres of trees were planted in an old field near North River.[18]

While personnel in the forests preceding the George Washington spent many of the early years trying to ensure a solid growth of timber, they by no means ignored other activities.

They developed the groundwork for the oldest cooperative wildlife agreement between a state and National Forest. They were also busy developing recreation, scenic overlooks and other uses. The Multiple-Use Act was not passed until 1960

but it has played a role in the forests of Virginia since at least the 1930s.

In 1938, E. C. Hawes, acting George Washington supervisor wrote in a letter to John W. McNair, who was by then the supervisor of the Jefferson National Forest: "As nearly as possible, it is believed advisable to get the 'multiple use' idea across."[19]

Even earlier than that, H.M. Sears, Natural Bridge National Forest Supervisor wrote: "Stream flow protection, timber production, and recreation, the three principal uses of the National Forest, do not preclude the use of the land for other purposes."[20]

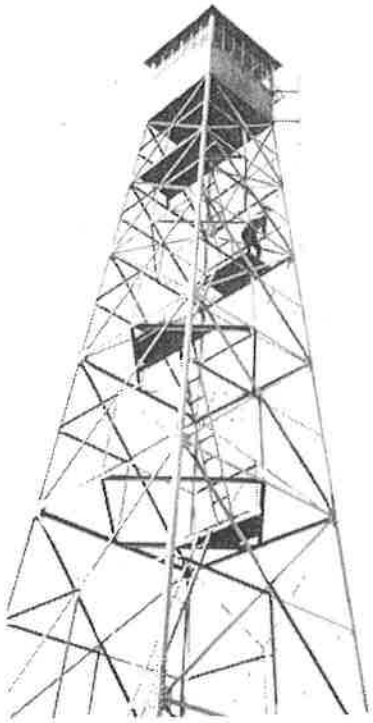
The concept even shows up in a 1938 Eastern Region (which contained the Virginia Forests) poster. Its "multiple-use" list included: timber, based on sustained yield; grazing; watershed protection; other uses such as berry picking; recreation and wildlife.[21]

The multiple-use concept and the authority to cooperate with the state provided many benefits in one area in particular: wildlife management.

H.M. Sears, when he was supervisor at Natural Bridge, is credited with helping encourage wildlife projects both in the National Forests and in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"As manager of National Forest Lands, the U.S. Forest Service began the task of rebuilding the soil and vegetative cover, but state laws governing hunting and fishing still applied on federal lands. This left wildlife right in the middle -- fed and sheltered by a federal agency but taken by hunters and fishermen as sanctioned by the state. The only guide was a law passed in 1908 directing the Forest Service to 'cooperate with the state in the enforcement of laws relating to livestock and game.'

"Guided by this early directive and by the vision of Supervisor H.M. Sears of the old Natural Bridge National Forest ... agreements were reached so that wildlife on the National Forests could be effectively protected and managed."[22]



Fire tower at Wallace Peak in 1938 in the Deerfield Ranger District.

The poor condition of the forest, and overhunting, had devastated much of the wildlife. The Forest Service in the early 1920s and 1930s started trying to develop small herds of deer through cooperation with the commonwealth.[23] Another popular program started in 1931: stocking the forests' many streams with trout.[24]

Not all wildlife programs were entirely successful. Efforts were make in both 1917 and 1935 to reintroduce the elk. But too much of the species' undisturbed habitat was already gone.[25]

While the forest made inroads into wildlife management, much of the nation was mired in the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s. These depression years brought both difficult times and unique opportunities to the forests of Virginia.

The forests faced trying times for a number of reasons including a drop in timber sales[26] and an increase in the number of arson cases.[27]

In 1926, three years before the depression, the Natural Bridge National Forest had only one arson case and a total of 23 fires. About 235 acres were burned. In 1930, the combination of dry weather and arson helped produce 39 fires that burned 7,457 acres. At least 17 of those fires were set.[28]

While not trying to explain why the depression would spur more arson fires, the Fire Plan of 1933 for Natural Bridge National Forest stated: "As might be expected, the incendiary fire has increased during the depression rising from 13 percent of all fires during 1921-1925 ... with a peak of 40 percent in the one year of 1930."[29]

In addition to fire, timber interests faced more trouble. A peak for timber production had passed by the 1930s, and the price for lumber and related forest

products plummeted because of the depression.[30]

But the depression did not spell doom for the Forest Service. Several encouraging events developed: first, President Franklin Roosevelt was willing to pour money from his New Deal into the National Forests. In the east alone, $20 million was appropriated for land purchases.[31]

This enabled older forests, such as the George Washington, to be consolidated and to grow. While records here cannot document what New Deal money actually purchased, there is a record of considerable change throughout the 1930s.

The first was only indirectly caused by federal spending in the area: a National Park was being established in the mountains of western Virginia. It was to be called the Shenandoah National Park.

An executive order from the president arrived in 1932 concerning the name of the local National Forest:

"In order to avoid the confusion arising from the fact that there is a National Park and a National Forest in the State of Virginia bearing the same name, that is 'Shenandoah,' it is hereby ordered that the name of the 'Shenandoah National Forest' ... be changed to 'George Washington National Forest' in honor of George Washington, first president of the United States," reads the order dated June 28, 1932.[32]

Also plans were made in the early 1930s for the Natural Bridge National Forest to be absorbed into the George Washington. A Forest Service publication, "National Forest Areas" published in June, 1932, no longer lists the Natural Bridge, and combines the acreage from that forest with the George Washington.[33]

All of that land was not to remain in the George Washington for long. By 1935, surveys were well under way for the start of what was originally going to by called the Mountain Lake National Forest.[34] This forest would eventually be called the Jefferson.

Federal money was poured into the eastern forests during the 1930s. Below, workers used hand-tools to finish the Fort Valley Road in the Massanutten range in 1933.

The new forest took some land from the Natural Bridge and Unaka National Forest (which had land stretching from Tennessee into Virginia) and combined these areas with new land acquisitions.[35]

By June 1936 "National Forest Areas" listed two, large forests in Virginia: the George Washington, with headquarters in Harrisonburg and the Jefferson with headquarters in Roanoke. These designations have remained the same to this day.

President Roosevelt's New Deal had a second important impact in the National Forests: the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

The George Washington provided the land for Camp Roosevelt, the first CCC camp in the nation. It opened its doors April 17, 1933. Actually, the camp had no doors to open: it was merely a wooded area on Massanutten Mountain.[36]

The man in charge of constructing the camp William F. Train observed: "First we had trouble finding the place ... . Then the second day it turned into a sea of mud. We had been ordered to build the camp in a week, and we made considerable progress despite the weather because we were told that President Roosevelt was going to make a personal inspection. He never showed up, but we named it Camp Roosevelt anyway."[37]

In total, 14 camps were eventually opened in the George Washington. These provided jobs for young men who were unable to find work during the depression. These men were paid $30 per month. The men sent at least $25 home and were free to spend the remaining $5 in nearby communities, spurring local economies.[38]

The CCC unquestionably helped thousands of young men get much needed work. But the National Forest benefited as well.

Harold L. Borden, supervisor from 1935-1937 said: "In the construction of the many improvements on this forest there are innumerable engineering problems to be solved in locating and building roads and trails, designing bridges and culverts and the construction of telephone lines and towers for the primary purposes of protection and administration.

"Since the establishment of the CCC camps in 1933 it has been possible to speed up the improvement program materially. In these last three years improvements have been made that would have taken from 20 to 25 years if it were necessary to depend upon the small annual appropriations formerly received."[39]

Mapping and surveying improved during the 1930s, in part from the help of the CCC. Borden said earlier timber surveys had been conducted on only small portions of the forest.

It was not until 1934 with the help of the CCC, Borden said, that a systematic survey of the entire forest was begun. In just two years, about one quarter of the forest was surveyed.[40]

It was also during 1934 that the forest was able to start using aerial surveys. During 1934 and 1935 aerial photographs were taken of the entire forest adding detail and accuracy to the forest maps.[41]

In all, the CCC employed 9,200 men in Virginia during the nine years of the program's existence.[42] Their work is still evident today in structures at Sherendo Lake, the High Knob fire tower, picnic shelters, campgrounds, roads and many other projects.

"Since the establishment of the CCC camps in 1933 it has been possible to speed up the improvement program materially. In these last three years improvements have been made that would have taken from 20 to 25 years if it were necessary to depend upon the small annual appropriations formerly received."

Harold L. Borden
Forest Supervisor

A glance at the past

The CCC

A grey mist held the hillside in its grasp. From time to time, someone would look at the sky and say, "Yep, it looks like the rain has held off."

Many in the crowd were pushing 80 years of age but they referred to each other as boys, because they ***were*** boys when they first met and worked together in the 1930s and early 1940s.

They were the Civilian Conservation Corps boys, the CCC.

Now, 50 to 60 years later they still get together once a year for a reunion at Camp Roosevelt, the first CCC camp built in the nation.

On Sunday, Sept. 9, 1990, they gathered as they usually do, with good food, good conversation and a desire to touch that time in their lives when they had come together as young men looking for honest work.

They remembered that some from their CCC days had not lived through the previous year. And as these older gentlemen sat under the same trees they had known in their youths, the newly deceased were remembered as obituaries were read, a silent moment was observed and a prayer was offered.

God, family and country were mentioned often during this reunion because God and country had reached out to give each of these men a desperately needed chance when they were young and, in turn, enabled them to help their family.

"It was a terrible period in our lives," said James R. Wilkins, who became the youngest camp superintendent in the nation when he took charge of Camp Roosevelt at age 23 in the mid-1930s. "We were in the grip of a grinding depression."

For Wilkins, this time had a particular poignancy, for he was often the one that channeled the young men off the street and into the CCC camps.

"I recall staying in Buena Vista," he said. "We saw the boys coming through town on top of boxcars looking for work of any kind. Sometimes there were 100 at a time. Some had shoes, some did not. These were the boys we put to work."

Camp Roosevelt, near Luray, was the first but it was followed by as many as 4,499 other camps across the nation. In Virginia, the camps filled the mountains with working young men, some at established camps like Roosevelt.

Other CCC workers were sent to smaller "spike" camps at places like Capon Springs and Cub Run and still others were relegated to the "black" camps.

They built roads and telephone lines, trails and campgrounds. Their numbers fluctuated with passing programs. Camp Roosevelt usually had 200 to 225 men. But sometimes that number swelled to close to 300 as cooks were brought in and trained.

At first they lived in tents which generated their own stories: "Back when we were living in

the tents, I remember we had a tremendous storm," said one former CCCer. "The whole back half of my tent got knocked in with snow. Those were the days." Then regular barracks were built.

The CCC was one of the first programs started by President Franklin D. Roosevelt when he took office in 1932.

One speaker at the reunion marveled that Roosevelt would have been interested in a program like CCC.

"Why would someone with a wealthy family background like his be interested in the average man, with the average young person?" asked the Rev. Carl F. Corwin, of Front Royal, who worked with CCC during two different periods in his early life.

In reviewing Roosevelt's life, he emphasized both the wealth that the Roosevelts enjoyed as well as the personal difficulties Roosevelt endured with polio. As a young man the president had also been encouraged by his family to learn a variety of farming skills.

In the end, he created a program that permitted young men a chance to get going in their lives. His program would give young men both jobs and skills that would later enable they to get work in the private community. Most sent money home to families.

"It was not a hand-out," Corwin said. "We worked for what we got. And it gave us hope, it instilled in us a desire to do something with our lives."

Three CCC enrollees sharpen tools at Camp Roosevelt in 1933 or 1934.

One man at the reunion remembered a fellow CCCer who was just one of 13 brothers and sisters. He sent the required $25 out a $30-a-month payment home to his family that literally had to decide which meal they could afford to eat that day.

The boys were also encouraged to spend the remaining $5-a-month they were paid in the local towns.

"We were instructed to spend money locally, to put dollars back in circulation and restore prosperity to America," Wilkins said.

America benefited from the program in several ways, Wilkins said.

"It saved our country from anarchy and revolution," he said. "I'm convinced that had it (the depression and lack of jobs) gone on for a few more years, we could have had a revolution in this country."

He also said the CCC should be credited for providing skilled men to serve in the armed forces during World War II.

The CCC program has long since past into history. But the work of these young men remains, scattered throughout the George Washington National Forest and across the nation

And once a year, they get together and remember.

4

Coming of Age, the Post-War Years

The time during and after World War II seems quiet compared to the formative years. The initial history of the Forest Service in Virginia showed changes occurring monthly when forests and districts went through seemingly indecipherable changes in boundaries, names and offices.

During the war, there was not enough manpower or money to generate massive changes or projects.[1] Ever since the 1940s, Virginia's National Forests have maintained the same names and similar overall boundaries.

In the George Washington, the districts had settled down to a basic six. The forest's work plan in 1948 listed these districts: Lee, with 160,856 acres; the Dry River with 236,524 acres; the Deerfield, with 156,912 acres; the Pedlar with 138,651 acres; the Warm Springs with 156,620 acres; and the James River with 146,676 acres plus about 75,000 approved for transfer from the Jefferson National Forest.

There is a sense, however, that changes in both the George Washington and the Forest Service shifted from the external to the internal. While the Forest Service had always been driven by the philosophy of conservation and had been engineered by legislation, the post war years provided the backdrop for later massive planning efforts and at times, sharp debate over the philosophies governing forest management.[2]

One of the more remarkable changes to occur just after World War II was the development of a more mobile and recreation-seeking society. Between 1945 and 1956, the number of visitors to some southern Appalachian forests increased as much as four times.[3]

The work plan for the George Washington National Forest in 1948 notes: "Every phase of recreational use is increasing by leaps and bounds. Use in excess of facilities prevails at all our developed areas ... With present finances we can scarcely do half the job."[4]

It would be terribly inaccurate to say that recreation was not emphasized prior to World War II. The Sherando Lake project, in the 1930s, along with established camps at Elizabeth Furnace and other locations involved thousands of dollars and man hours.

But the post-war years produced a push in recreation for several reasons. First, military action had pulled money and the labor pool away from developing new recreation sites and maintaining the existing ones. In addition to playing catch-up, the Forest Service also faced a greater demand from a now more-mobile and prosperous public.[5]

In addition to an increase in demand, the Forest Service in the Appalachians was still trying to resolve issues involving local versus non-local publics. The 1948

After World War II, a more mobile public demanded more recreation facilities. The George Washington responded with projects such as the Brandywine Recreation Area. Above, Deputy Chief Richard Droege, left, Forest Supervisor A.H. Anderson and West Virginia Senator Robert Bird, right, pose during the dedication of the recreation area in May 1964.

George Washington work plan specifically noted the forest's proximity to Washington D.C. and concluded that the George Washington would "always have a high recreational use and value."[6]

A history of the Forest Service in the Appalachians noted: "... forest officers often accepted unquestioningly the idea that the National Forests were a national possession and belong to 'the people' ... When the needs and interest of recreation users from outside areas came into conflict with those of the local mountain residents, whose interest should come first?"[7]

Up until this time, neither the George Washington, nor the region itself had integrated recreation as a form of land-use into its resource management plans. The need to start building again after the war, prompted detailed, long-range recreation plans.[8]

Timber had also been affected by World War II -- a greater demand for wood had created what some called destructive logging practices. During the war years, forests in the south produced two and a half times their normal timber cut.[9]

Forest records show that this forest cut just over 10 million board feet of timber in 1939 and and 12.15 in 1943. A peak came in 1941 when the George Washington produced 16.10 million board feet.

Also in the Appalachian region, the timber industry began to be characterized more and more by small operations. During the 1940s and 1950s, small, portable sawmills became prevalent.

Above, a copy of a poster that appeared on cigarette bags as part of a fire safety program in the George Washington National Forest. Below, another fire prevention poster.

By 1954, about 90 percent of the timber companies in the mountains employed fewer than 20 employees.[10]

This in no way reflected on a diminished value for the timber industry in the region. Using 1967 dollars, salaries in forest industries of the south rose from about $700 million in 1948 to $1.2 billion by 1972.[11]

The increasing value in the publicly-held timberlands created controversy nation-wide. Twice since the 1940s, proposals have been made in Congress to break up the National Forests and sell them to the private sector.[12] These and other issues fed the steam-roller effect that led to major forest management acts in the 1960s.

This era also produced one of the most recognized symbols in this nation.

In 1942, some Japanese shells fell close to a western forest. Forestry officials became concerned that the war might create serious forest fire problems. A campaign was launched to prevent wildfires, complete with a poster of a leering Japanese soldier holding a flaming match.[13]

Girl Scout troops near the George Washington National Forest joined the wartime, fire prevention efforts when they made small red bags for safely storing cigarettes and matches. The words "Flaming matches aid the axis" appear over a miniature version of the Japanese soldier poster which is attached to the bag.[14]

The fire prevention effort took on a less sinister tone after the war when the Forest Service contracted with Walt Disney to use Bambi as a fire-prevention symbol. When that contract was lost, an ad agency was consulted and Smokey Bear was created in 1945.[15]

Now in the 1990s the George Washington National Forest continues to cooperate with the Virginia Department of Forestry to use Smokey Bear in fire prevention efforts.

While Smokey helped lead a strong fire prevention effort, the overall organization for fire suppression was changing. The 1940s through 1960s was a time when the earlier fire warden and fire tower system was gradually faded out in the George Washington.

The original warden system involved one warden and his crew of up to 20 local people. This was highly dependent on a farm economy which kept men in their local communities and able to leave their work to fight a fire.

As more industry and office jobs were created in the Shenandoah Valley, and road systems were improved to permit commuting, fewer people were readily available to fight fires under the old warden system.[16]

In connection with the warden system, watch towers were used to spot the fire. The person who spotted the fire, called the warden closest to the estimated location of the fire.[17] More than 20 fire towers at one time poked up from various mountains and knobs throughout the forest.

By 1963, the Forest Service Handbook for the George Washington listed phone numbers and radio frequencies for lookouts at 12 towers, with at least one per district. A secondary lookout is listed at High Knob.

In 1965 airplanes were used for the first time to detect fires in this forest. Bill Leichter, who would later become ranger for the James River District, was the first aerial observer. He flew out of Bridgewater and Mt. Jackson.

The role of the fire towers began to diminish in the late 1950s through 1970s as aerial detection flights started to take over and towers were used only a few days a year during critical fire weather.[18]

By 1973, numbers are listed only at Elliot Knob and Wallace Peak in the Deerfield Ranger District and Reddish Knob in the Dry River Ranger District.[19]

During the 1980s, even the aerial flights ceased. By that time, enough people were living in and around the forest to report the early start of a fire.[20]

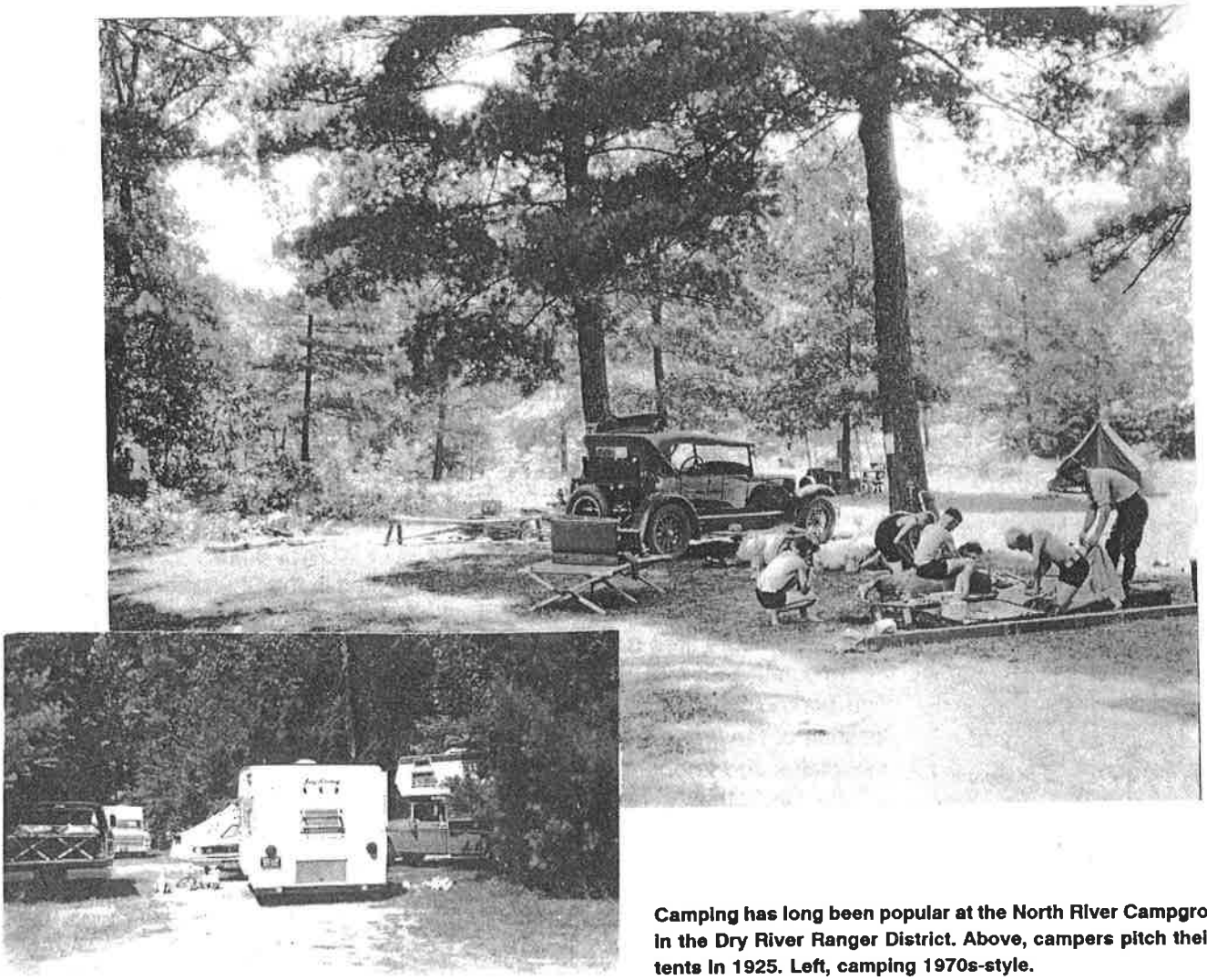
This era also produced at least one major jurisdictional change for the George Washington.

All forests are assigned to a specific region under the direction of a regional forester. In the days when the regions were known as districts, the George Washington was part of District 7 which included all the eastern seaboard extending as far west as Missouri.

When the regions were created in the 1930s, this huge district was divided, creating Region 8 in the south and Region 7 in the northeast. The first regional forester in the south, Joseph C. Kircher, served from 1934 to 1946.[21]

To streamline operations, the Forest Service in late 1965 and early 1966 eliminated Region 7 and divided its forests between Region 9 and Region 8.

The George Washington became the northern-most forest in Region 8 where it remains today.[22]



Camping has long been popular at the North River Campground in the Dry River Ranger District. Above, campers pitch their tents in 1925. Left, camping 1970s-style.

A glance at the past

Cooperation Builds Wildlife Program

Turkey, bear, deer and many other species were driven almost to extinction in western Virginia due to unregulated hunting and poor land management practices during the late 1800s.

As partners, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the George Washington National Forest, have been able to reestablish many species.

The Forest Service has been working cooperatively with the Virginia Department of (formerly Commission of) Game and Inland Fisheries for more than 50 years.

A management agreement between the two agencies was signed in 1938. They had already begun working together on wildlife projects prior to the formal agreement.

This is the first wildlife agreement developed between a state and the Forest Service and has been a model for many other state and federal cooperative programs.

An agreement quickly followed in 1940 with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Section.

A 3,000-acre game refuge near Waynesboro, Va., is an example of Virginia and the George Washington working together for the benefit of wildlife. The refuge was established July 17, 1930,

Continued on next page

By the turn of the century, deer were almost wiped out of Virginia and West Virginia. Cooperative agreements with wildlife agencies in both states have brought deer back in abundance.

and was used primarily for restocking deer.

The Big Levels Game Refuge gained national attention for the forest on July 6, 1935 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an act enlarging the Big Levels Game Refuge from the original 3,000 acres to more than 32,000 acres.

The area was enlarged for the experimental management of wildlife resources and was watched by managers across the country.

A. Willis Robertson, at the time a U.S. Representative and later chairman of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, sparked the project with much support and guidance from Justis H. Cline, a retired geologist in Stuarts Draft and George Washington Forest Supervisor John W. McNair.

H.M. Sears, supervisor of the old Natural Bridge National Forest, is also credited with his vision and foresight in developing wildlife cooperation with Virginia.

The Big Levels area was to be intensively managed for wildlife. This included deer and beaver stocking, cleared wildlife fields, hunting prohibitions and restoration of other game species.

Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees from nearby Camp Sherando assisted in many of the early projects in the refuge. They patrolled, built fences and constructed wildlife openings.

To assist in the experiment, general hunting was prohibited. From 1935 until 1940, 58 white-tailed deer were stocked along with two beaver and four bear. The animals were sent to the refuge from the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina.

The project was supported by donations from school children, farmers, sportsmen and business firms as well as the Waynesboro Game and Fish Protective Association.

In 1951, the Big Levels Game Refuge was reopened to hunters for the first time since 1936. Nearby farmers had complained that an overpopulation of deer was damaging crops.

During the first seasons, hunters had to win permits through a lottery to hunt in the refuge. At least 60 percent of the permits were granted to Augusta County, Va., residents and the rest to people from outside.

The cooperative work between the Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries continues. Each year the two agencies work together to protect and enhance the unique flora and fauna of western Virginia.

These Canada geese take advantage of duck islands built in Lake Moomaw, made possible by cooperators.

5

The Deciding Years

As this history is prepared, the George Washington National Forest is in the midst of a major effort to produce a comprehensive Land and Resource Management Plan.

This is by no means the first planning effort. In some cases, documents from earlier plans are stuck away in an old filing cabinet, made obsolete by newer legislation and policy.

Yet other planning documents are still valid, awaiting the completion of the final plan.

All planning activity in the last 30 years has come as a result of major natural resources legislation that has mandated such things as detailed planning, wilderness and endangered species protection, sustained yield and multiple use.

But are the concepts that have been integrated into planning really new? A familiarity with the histories of both the Forest Service and the George Washington shows that what later became legislation had existed in concept from the very beginning.

The first major piece of legislation to spur all the legislative activities -- the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960[1] -- had its basic precepts in place in the Forest Service as long ago as the 1920s and 1930s.[2]

What is different now? That which had been a good concept in the past, now carries the weight of Congress: it is the law of the land.

The flurry of legislation during the 1960s-1980s was ushered in by an increasing interest by the public in environmental issues. Some have noted an increasing polarization during that time period between preservationists, who believe the forests should remain virtually untouched, and conservationists who stress wise use of natural resources.[3]

The 1960 Multiple-use Sustained-Yield Act gave legislative bite to Gifford Pinchot's concept of the greatest good for the greatest number of people.[4] It established outdoor recreation, watershed, range, timber and wildlife as the principle purposes for the National Forests.[5]

But the act was very quickly viewed as too vague and too simplistic to deal with the complex issues facing the forests.[6] This opened the way to numerous other acts which clarified the forest management movement.

Three acts provide the legal framework for the current planning effort: the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 which requires federal agencies to report environmental effects to the public; the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, which developed the procedure for long-range national assessments of woods and range; and the National Forest Management

Act of 1976 which required full public participation in the development and revision of forest land-management plans.[7]

The George Washington National Forest planning history parallels that of the rest of the Forest Service. An interdisciplinary team work plan, presented in 1979, listed many different plans already developed here.

These included a 1972 document called the Direction for Managing the George Washington National Forest, a 1973 Guide for Managing the National Forest in the Appalachians and a variety of Unit Plans.[8]

Unit planning was just one example of a planning concept that was developed and then faltered with the change in outlook and legislation. Unit Plans developed objectives and environmental analysis for specific geographic areas. Taken as a whole they would have provided the overall plan for the forest.[9]

The Unit planning effort was essentially halted after the National Forest Management Act of 1976 because that type planning would not keep the forest in compliance with the new law.[10]

The first documents in the current planning effort were developed in 1979. These culminated in a Land and Resource Management Plan in 1986. While the Environmental Impact Statement -- written as a supplemental document to the plan -- was under review, the public sent more than 3,000 letters to comment on issues raised by the plan and its supporting documents.[11]

This reflected the continuing controversy that surrounded all forest plans developed in the early 1980s. Many plans were hampered by unsettled issues and changing policies.[12]

Eventually, 18 individuals or groups filed appeals. While seven of these were resolved, 11 remained to be handled. Because of the ongoing controversy, the Forest Service Washington Office remanded the plan to the forest in September 1989: the plan had to be extensively revised.[13]

Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson's recommended that the forest use greater care in assessing public opinion in identifying issues, develop more substantial economic analysis, give a greater range of alternatives, and consider alternative harvesting systems beyond clearcutting.[14]

Less than four months after the plan was remanded to the forest, the first public meeting was scheduled to begin the public participation process. This has been followed by numerous other public meetings.

"This [public] process is challenging, but at the same time rewarding in a sense of the high level of public participation we've received," Forest Supervisor George W. Kelley wrote in a January 1991 message about the plan. "This continued high level of interest will assure our interdisciplinary team of producing an environmentally sound document that will be used to set the future direction of the George Washington with the ability to be adjusted as new issues arise."[15]

George Wayne Kelley
Forest Supervisor 1986-present

The forest currently has an 11-member interdisciplinary team working on the plan revision. A draft of the plan and its supporting environmental impact statement is due October 1991, followed by a final version in May 1992.[16]

"Upon completion, the plan will denote an important landmark in the history of the George Washington National Forest," George W. Kelley wrote. "The Forest Land Management Plan process is the cornerstone of our management philosophy. It blends public issues concerns with our mandate for managing multiple uses such as wildlife, recreation, timber, forage and water."[17]

But planning has not been the only area of major activity for the forest over the last 30 years. Other legislation has had a significant impact on the George Washington.

Like other eastern National Forests, the George Washington took advantage of the Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975 to protect four areas in the forest from future development.

The 1975 act built on the Wilderness Act of 1964 which set aside undisturbed areas and established strict guidelines to reduce the impact of man. The Eastern Act provided guidelines for wilderness areas in the east where population levels were already high.[18]

In 1984, Congress approved two wilderness areas in the George Washington: St. Mary's and Ramsey's Draft. Later, Rich Hole and Rough Mountain wilderness areas were added.

As of 1991, St. Mary's was the largest wilderness area in the forest with 9,835 acres followed by Rough Mountain with 9,300 acres, Ramsey's Draft with 6,518 acres and Rich Hole with 6,450 acres.

About 95 acres from Shawvers Run and 20 acres from Barbours Creek wilderness areas cross from the Jefferson National Forest into the George Washington.

The Threatened and Endangered Species Act of 1973 also created activity in this forest. This act protects threatened and endangered species as well as their habitat.[19]

As a result, wildlife biologists have completed studies on species such as the snowshoe hare, the Cow Knob salamander and Shale Barren Rock Cress.

Other programs have helped reintroduce endangered species. For three summers, 1987-90, the Forest Service along with cooperators have worked to reintroduce the Peregrine falcon.

Wilderness areas allow visitors to observe nature undisturbed.

A glance at the past

The Ravages of Nature

Fires, floods, ice and insects: the George Washington National Forest has seen them all.

One of the most dramatic fires to occur in this forest since 1960 was the Jawbone fire April 3-6, 1981, in the Lee Ranger District.

According to a report called the Jawbone Wildfire Analysis, the 4,400-acre fire burned during a year-long drought that affected most of the southeastern states.

During the first three months of 1981, the George Washington had already experienced 31 fires. Just before the fire started, a more-than 600 acre fire burned in the Shenandoah National Park, taking up some of the Forest Service's available fire personnel.

From its initial spark, the fire crept along, building slowly from a quarter-acre up to five acres before it blew up at about noon on April 3.

During the Jawbone Fire, others broke out in the forest including six in one night. This, in addition to fires region wide, made it difficult to locate additional crews and resources.

By April 5, a total of 330 firefighters were fighting the fire. That day, the fire was considered contained. By 6 p.m. April 7, the fire was controlled.

The Jawbone was by no means the only major fire to occur in the last several decades.

The Hellgate fire on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1965, scorched 2,163 acres. That fire was particularly interesting because it was characterized by running, crowning, spotting, the generation of fire whirlwinds 15 feet in diameter with 150 foot heights, and flame heights 10 to 40 feet with flashes up to sixty feet.

In 1971, the James River Ranger District experienced a big fire. More than 1,176 acres burned in a fire at Potts Creek on April 24, 1971. That area eventually was replanted by young people and called the Eastern National Children's Forest.

Just the opposite extreme occurred Nov. 4-5, 1985, when a weather system created by Hurricane Juan stalled out over Virginia and West Virginia creating havoc in all 17 counties where the George Washington has land.

Between 7 and 19 inches of rain fell in a three to four day period swelling creeks and rivers to flood levels. Before it was over, all six ranger districts had sustained damage.

No one, either working for the Forest Service or on George Washington land, was killed or injured. But at least 26 were killed in the surrounding flooded areas.

As the water receded, forest personnel began to make assessments. Whole recreation areas were destroyed. Beaches and stream beds were heavily eroded. Gapping wholes appeared in road beds and some bridges were completely washed out.

Forest engineers had to quickly get to work on 127 projects, including bridge, dam and road

Continued on next page

repairs. Total cost: $2.4 million.

Another hurricane brought flood damage to the George Washington. During August, 1969, Hurricane Camille dumped 27 inches of rain in the Buena Vista and Rockbridge County area. Six feet of water rushed through downtown Buena Vista, burying homes and business under water.

Forest Service damage estimates alone exceeded $448,000 to repair facilities and roads. Nearly $80,000 was spent to repair Sherando Lake Recreation Area alone.

Water in another form caused serious damage to the forest March 25-26, 1978. A storm dubbed the "Easter Ice Storm" damaged more than one in 10 trees throughout five districts.

Only the Pedlar Ranger District was spared the branch-breaking, tree-uprooting fury of this storm.

Two long-term effects were experienced. One: a greater fuel load from all the downed timber increased fire danger over the next several years. Just three years later the forest was hit by the drought that produced the Jawbone fire and many others.

Scenic beauty was also affected. "Many visitors to the forest come solely to view the mountain scenery," one writer noted in the Environmental Analysis Report covering the storm.

"As a result of the ice storm, the visual resource sustained an impact which will require many years for nature to heal," the report stated.

During the mid-1980s a very different kind of forest threat began to emerge. By this time, the gypsy moth made its presence known in Virginia.

When gypsy moths are in their caterpillar stage, they devour so many leaves that acres of trees can be defoliated. When a tree has been stripped of its leaves several times, it usually dies.

This voracious critter had been accidentally introduced into the United States during the middle part of the 19th century as part of a silk-making experiment.

With no natural enemies, the gypsy moth made its way south and west until it reached Virginia.

In 1986 about 1,870 acres in the Lee Ranger District were defoliated. By 1990, that figure had grown to 126,000 acres with a majority of the damage in the Lee and Dry River Ranger districts.

Despite limited efforts to control the pest, it is making its way south through the forest. Entomologists expect the moth to continue its damage over the next decades.

Districts

Deerfield Ranger District

While other districts, and even National Forests, were formed, joined together, split up and renamed, the Deerfield Ranger District has maintained its name and basic boundaries since the late 1910s.

Even the forest name has changed -- from the Shenandoah to the George Washington -- since the time when this district was formed.

The Deerfield shares its beginnings with the Dry River Ranger District. Both were part of an area known as the Shenandoah Purchase Unit, a basic boundary where federal purchases could be made for a new National Forest.

While the Shenandoah Unit lived on as the first name of the George Washington National Forest, the Deerfield became closely associated with its local community which rapidly accepted the district as one of its own.

The tiny village of Deerfield, is surrounded by Forest Service land. Many of its residents have worked for the Forest Service, especially in the old fire tower and fire warden system.

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The towers were built on nearby Elliott Knob, Mill Mountain and Wallace Peak and wired into a telephone system that was owned by the Forest Service from 1922 to 1954.

The Augusta Wood Products Co., a manufacturer of oil barrel staves, was one of the main industries in the village at the time the Deerfield District was getting established.

Locals had hoped that the company would bring prosperity to the village as it built a railroad line into the community and set up operations. Some in the area still remember a sawmill and tan bark mill that were run by the company.

After production started, the wood products company realized it had neither the quality nor quantity of timber it needed for its operations. It ceased operations in fall, 1919.

But railroad lines from the company still exist along with at least 21 "company homes" from that era.

One other facility is still around: the old Deerfield Work Center. The district purchased property from August Wood Products in 1922 and built the work center.

The property included a company house that became a home available to district rangers and other personnel.

The Forest Service maintained an office in the village until the mid-1930s when the office shifted to Staunton.

But the Deerfield Work Center remained in use through the late 1970s. It is still used on occasion as a meeting point for fire crews and as a visitor center during hunting season.

Hunting has long been a favored activity in the area, and the Deerfield community has welcomed both local and out-of-state hunters with boarding arrangements and hunting season dinners.

But some wildlife, especially deer, have not always been readily available. Like the rest of the forest, the area now known as the Deerfield had been badly managed during the late 1800s.

By the early part of this century, many species had become almost extinct on the cut-over, burned out land later purchased by the Forest Service.

Meredith Leitch, the fifth Deerfield Ranger, was put in charge of restocking deer in the district.

Working in cooperation with state wildlife officials, the district in February 1939, brought in 23 deer from northern Michigan. About 75 people gathered to watch as the animals were released. According to one account, most of the deer ran up toward Elliott Knob.

Also in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps built at least two camps in the Deerfield area. The CCC gave young men and chance to work during severe depression years.

Among the projects completed by the CCC was a road built into the Ramsey's Draft area and another from Rocky Spring Church to Augusta Springs. They also worked on telephone lines, trails and recreation areas.

Like other sections of the George Washington, the Deerfield District has had to deal with fires and floods. The fire system has changed over the years. The old fire warden system disintegrated as more people left farm work; but the district still works with local firefighters who sign on when a fire breaks out.

The fire towers were gradually replaced with aerial observation and that has been replaced by local people and fire departments reporting fires to the Forest Service.

One element of nature won't change much: the periodic flooding of creeks and rivers.

Like the rest of the forest, the Deerfield was hit hard by a flood in November 1985. Several communities in the district were completely cut off from one another as the waters rose, damaging homes and Forest Service facilities.

When the Deerfield Ranger District offices were in the village of Deerfield, several buildings including this repair shop, were maintained.

Dry River Ranger District

In the new forest, the area now known as the Dry River Ranger District was divided into two districts: Brocks Gap on the north with an office in Broadway and North River to the south with an office in Dayton.

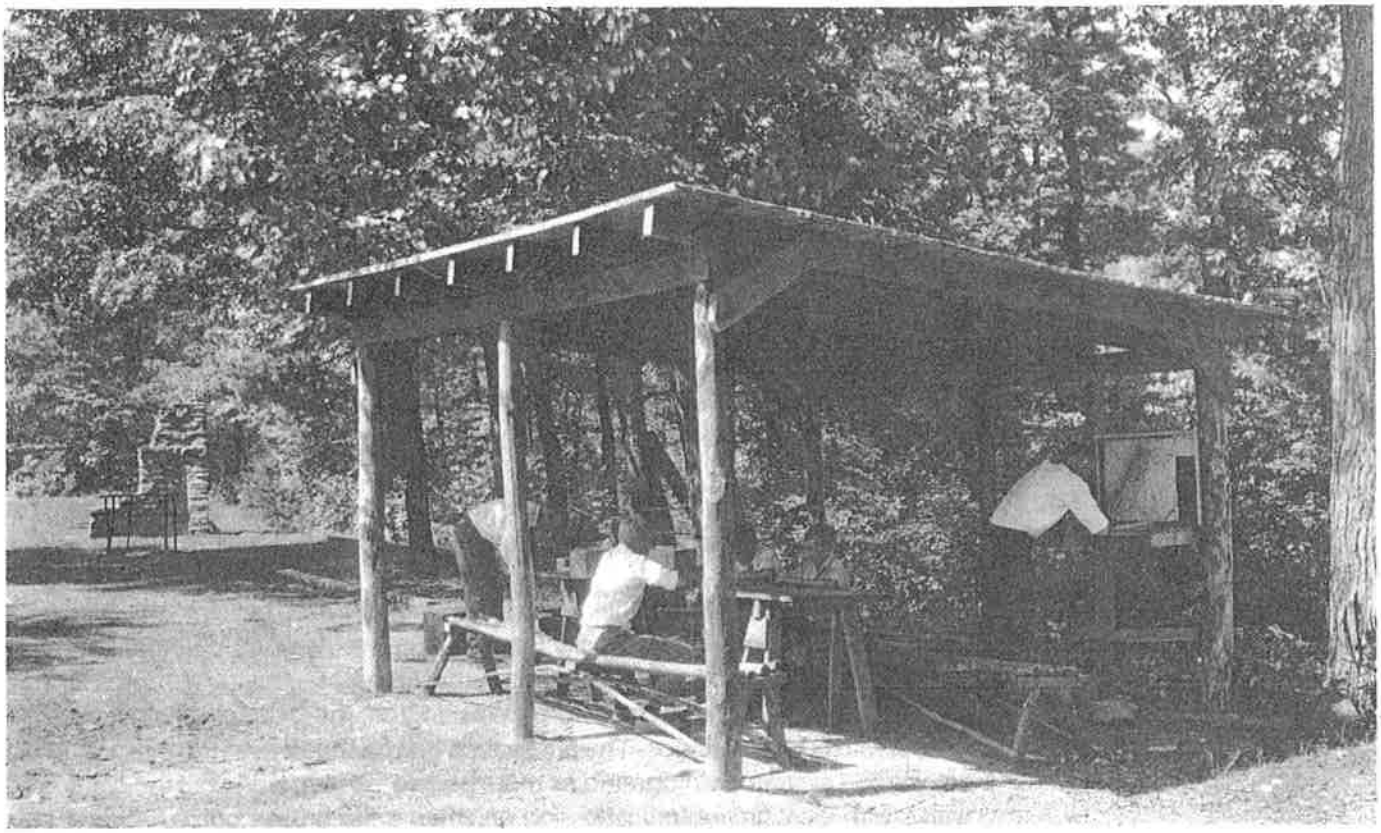
The area now known as the Dry River Ranger District is among the oldest Forest Service land holdings in the east.

Just two years after the Weeks Law was passed, allowing land acquisitions for watershed protection, the first land purchases were made in an area west of Harrisonburg.

This area was known as the Shenandoah Purchase Unit. The unit was to give four things to a new national forest: its name, office, first supervisor and two districts.

When the forest was formed in 1917, it took on the Shenandoah name. It was not changed to the George Washington National Forest until 1932 when it was changed to avoid confusion with the newly forming Shenandoah National Park.

Also, the purchase unit's administrative offices were in Harrisonburg. This was



Above, visitors in 1925 take advantage of an early picnic shelter in the Dry River Ranger District.

to become the location of the supervisor's office for the new national forest. That office has been maintained in Harrisonburg to this day.

The first supervisor for the new forest also came from this unit. S. H. Marsh had been forest examiner in charge of the Shenandoah Unit, while E.D. Clark headed up the two purchase units further north on what was to become the Lee Ranger District.

On April 16, 1917, William L. Hall, acting regional forester, wrote a letter to Marsh informing him that the three purchase units would be combined to form a new National Forest. In his letter, Hall instructed S.H. Marsh to become the forest supervisor.

In the new forest, the area now known as the Dry River Ranger District was divided into two districts: Brocks Gap on the north with an office in Broadway and North River to the south with an office in Dayton.

In 1929, the two districts were combined to form the Dry River with an office in Bridgewater. Abner Casey was to be the first ranger to serve under the Dry River name.

Only one other major geographic change affected the district. In 1960, the Broadway District was formed, taking some land from the Dry River.

The Broadway office was closed in 1971, and the land was reabsorbed into the Dry River and Lee districts.

Like other sections of the forest, the Dry River has had to contend with both natural and man-made disasters. From the start, the district had to be active in fire prevention and control in woods that had been badly damaged by timber operations, mining and fires.

By 1926, Harrisonburg Mutual Telephone Co. listed phone lines running to fire towers throughout the district including Cow Knob and Reddish Knob. The latter was sold for the grad sum of $419.95 after fire towers fell out of use in the 1970s.

The Civilian Conservation Corps included fire towers in its many work projects during the 1930s and early 1940s. The High Knob fire tower, one CCC project, is still standing.

The district's rivers and creeks have risen above their banks on several occasions causing flooding. A district water report states that unprecedented rains in June 1949, caused flooding and irreparable damage to both the upper and lower North River drainages.

The district's roads and bridges were also heavily damaged when more than 20 inches of rain fell in November 1985. After the flood, pictures show picnic tables where they had floated high up onto earthen dams. Despite the high water, none of the district dams failed.

Other important district history dates include May, 1964 when the Bradywine Recreation Area was dedicated; May 15, 1966 when Elkhorn Lake was dedicated; and July, 1968 when the newly constructed Todd Lake was opened.

James River Ranger District

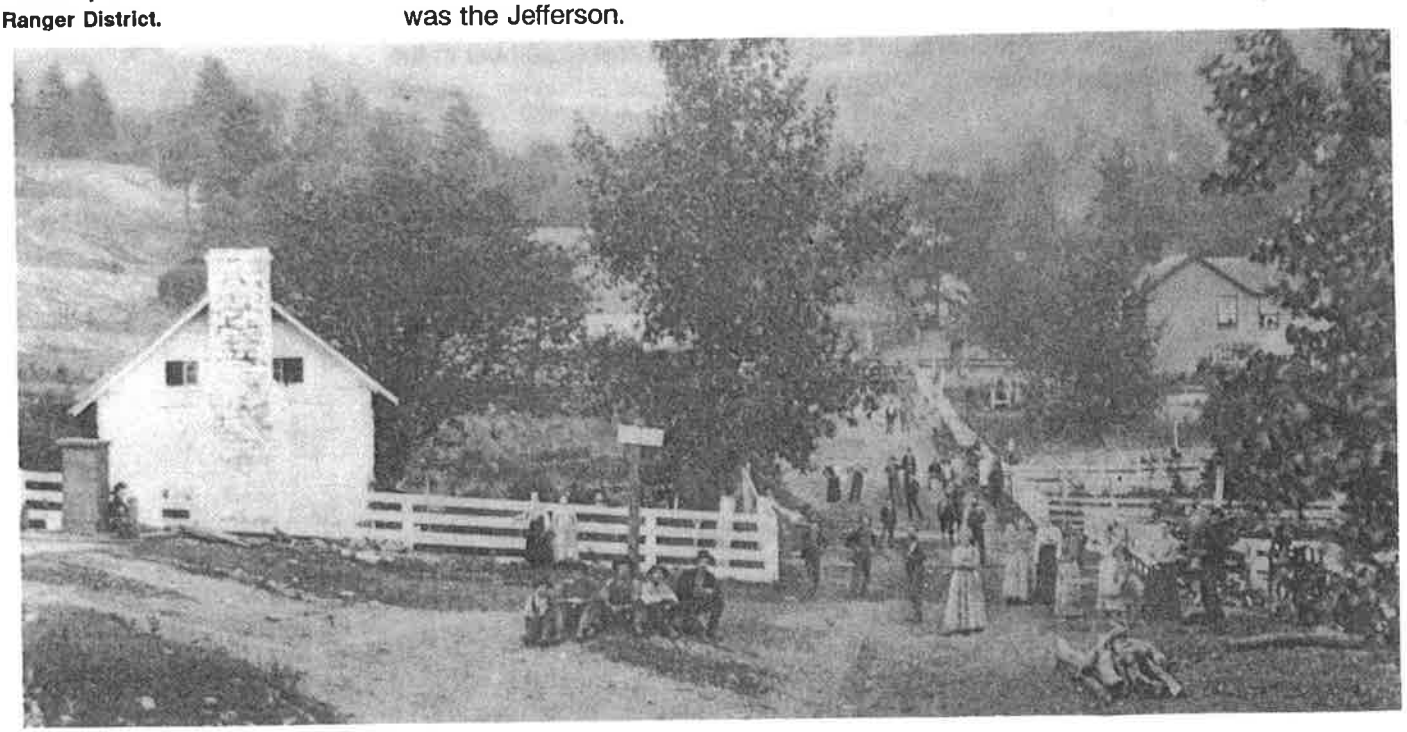
By Bill Leichter, District Ranger
Feb. 26 1978 to Oct. 31, 1990

The James River Ranger District was created in 1948 from the New Castle and Glenwood ranger districts of the Jefferson National Forest and the Warm Springs Ranger District of the George Washington National Forest.

The district manages about 164,000 acres of public land in Alleghany, Rockbridge and Botetourt counties in Virginia and Monroe County in West Virginia.

Until the James River District was formed, the administrative boundary between the Jefferson and George Washington national forests was U.S. Highway 60: the area to the north was the George Washington and the area to the south was the Jefferson.

Below is a picture of the tiny community of Campbell Fields in 1888. It would be another 60 years before land in this area would become part of the James River Ranger District.



Like other sections of the forest, the area now made up by the James River District had been repeatedly clearcut by either mining interests or timber companies. Many wildfires followed.

The majority of the land that makes up the district was purchased from large companies who had purchased the land for iron mining and charcoal production for the iron industries in the area. The other large blocks were purchased from timber companies.

Many old iron mines are found on the area that date from 1822 to about 1922 when the last furnace closed for good. During the period of 1900 to 1922 the furnaces used coke for fuel that came from West Virginia. The last furnace went out of blast in 1922.

While the Forest Service purchased the first tract in 1931, the majority of the land was acquired between 1936 and 1941. Additional land was purchased during the 1960s into the early 1970s.

Major dates in the district's history include:

Construction of the Longdale Recreation Area by members of the Dolly Ann CCC Camp in 1939. Before the integration of federal facilities, the recreation area was called the Green Pastures Forest Camp, and was built at the request of the Clifton Forge National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for blacks in the area.

From 1960 to 1985 the majority of resource management work on the district consisted of timber management and wildlife management.

The district has had a very active wildife and fisheries management program since its beginning. Like the rest of the forest, the district has worked closely with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

In 1972, the Eastern National Children's Forest was built on the site of a major wild fire that occurred in 1971. The Hunt-Wesson Foods Inc. provided funds to purchase tree seedlings from labels of food containers mailed in to the company.

The area was planted by children and was dedicated on Arbor Day 1972. There is a short paved trail, small mall area with a monument and buried time capsule on the site.

Timber cutters made the first clearcuts in the district during 1964 to 1965. The district was selling about 12 million board feet of pulpwood and sawtimber in the early 1970s. A movement away from clearcutting to other types of harvest systems began in 1989.

In 1982 Gathright Dam and Lake Moomaw was completed by the Corps of Engineers and was transferred to the Forest Service to manage the lake and recreation facilities.

A new work center on the site of the old work center was constructed in 1986.

In 1989 the Forest Service and Alleghany County signed a cost share agreement to build a beach, bath house, boat ramp and related facilities at Coles Point on Lake Moomaw. The project cost approximately $725,000 and involved funding from the Forest Service, Alleghany County, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Virginia Department of Conservation and Historic Resources.

The Low Moor Rifle Range was dedicated in August 1989. This was the first public rifle range on National Forest land in Virginia. It was constructed under a volunteer agreement with Dabney S. Lancaster Community College heavy equipment program.

Also in in 1989, the Forest Service designated The "Highlands Scenic Tour," the 51st National Forest Scenic Byway in the nation.

In 1972, the Eastern National Children's Forest was built on the site of a major wild fire that occurred in 1971.

Lee Ranger District

The Lee Ranger District boundaries include one of the roots that was to become the George Washington National Forest. Some of the first land to be studied for Forest Service ownership in the eastern states was along the Massanutten Mountains, to the east of the Shenandoah Valley, and Great North Mountain on the west.

The Weeks Law in 1911 authorized land acquisitions for watershed protection. Less than two years later, the first tracts were purchased in the area that was to become the Lee District.

A major portion of the land on the Massanuttens was purchased from the Alleghany Ore and Iron Co. which owned almost all the land on the southern end of that mountain range.

Areas considered for federal ownership were placed in purchase units. Tracts within these areas were then purchased as they became available.

The two primary units affecting the Lee were the Massanutten, including the land in that range, and the Potomac, which stretched from Capon Springs, W.Va., to the north, to Brocks Gap on the south and as far west as Lost City, W.Va.

Right, a sketch of the plaque awarded to the winners of a tug of war between the Massanutten and Potomac fire crews. This sketch appeared in a 1930 issue of the Eastern District Digest, a regional publication. The actual plaque hangs in the current office of the Lee Ranger District.

They were administered from a tiny two-room office in Woodstock, Va., under the leadership of E.D. Clark, forest examiner in charge.

Helen W. Gordon, a clerk, later described the office: "There were two rooms, a large front room ... containing rows of what we now term transfer cases, a large drafting table laboring under its burden of map, ownership and other data [and] a small typewriter desk to which were strapped or screwed three separate sets of call bells representing so many different lines running into different switchboards, and to the average visitor as unintelligible as the inscriptions on the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen ..."

M.A. Price, who worked with the forest examiner, may have developed the fire warden system that was later used throughout the forest and the region.

He recognized the difficulties in protecting land that had been severely cut-over, mined and razed by fires.

Originally, Forest Examiner E.D. Clark recommended that a fire warden be assigned a section of the forest and paid regardless of whether or not he actually had to fight any fires.

Crews would be made up by local men who would be paid 25 cents per hour. Wages in the Shenandoah Valley then averaged $1.25 for a 10-hour day. This plan was later tailored so that the wardens were not paid for stand-by duty.

To keep interest going the firefighters and wardens from the two purchase units in 1913 challenged each other to a major tug-of-war at the Shenandoah County Fair. A plaque was designed for the winner, and was won by the Massanutten firefighters the first two years.

By 1917, enough land had been acquired to form the Shenandoah -- later George Washington -- National Forest with two districts in the north. They were to be called the Lost River and Massanutten districts.

In July 1932, the two districts were combined to form the Lee.

"The name of Lee is so inseparably intertwined with Virginia history that is seems most fitting that his name be perpetuated in the forests we are rearing so carefully for future generations," forest supervisor John W. McNair wrote in a press release announcing the new district.

Less than a year later, the Lee District was involved with a project that would eventually help many unemployed young men across the nation.

April 17, 1933 the first Civilian Conservation Camp in the country opened in the district. Camp Roosevelt was built by the enrollees in an eastern part of Massanutten Mountain near Passage Creek.

The CCC brought workers into the mountains where they built roads, telephone lines and recreation facilities. The program lasted until 1943.

Only one other major geographic change affected the Lee District. In 1960, The Broadway District was formed taking land from the Dry River and Lee districts. It was dissolved in 1971 and the land was returned to the original districts.

Over the years, the Lee District has seen many major natural events. These included the Jawbone fire in April 1981, when as many as 330 firefighters at one time battled a 4,400-acre blaze up on Massanutten Mountain.

Four years later a flood caused damage all through the George Washington including the Lee District. In November 1985, swollen rivers knocked out bridges, roads and residences.

Of great significance in recent years has been the gypsy moth. Since the mid-1980s, the leave-eating caterpillars have worked their way down through the districts, defoliating thousands of acres of forested land.

"The name of Lee is so inseparably intertwined with Virginia history that is seems most fitting that his name be perpetuated in the forests we are rearing so carefully for future generations."

John W. McNair
Forest Supervisor

Pedlar Ranger District

By Kathy Hall
Interpretive forester

In fall 1911, the first appraisal engineers arrived at Natural Bridge, to begin appraisal of a tract of land offered for sale to the Forest Service.

Major William A. Anderson of Lexington offered this tract of about 25,000 acres for less than $4 per acre. It was followed by purchases in Botetourt, Bedford, Amherst, Augusta, and Nelson counties.

This was the beginning of Forest Service ownership that would lead eventually to the formation of the Pedlar Ranger District in the George Washington National Forest.

In 1914, the area was called Natural Bridge Purchase Unit. By May 16, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson had declared this the Natural Bridge National Forest with two ranger districts: the Glenwood with offices in Natural Bridge, and the Pedlar with offices in Buena Vista.

The Pedlar District finally came into the George Washington National Forest on April 28, 1936 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation dividing what was left of the Natural Bridge National Forest and the Mountain Lake Purchase Unit between the George Washington National Forest and the newly formed Jefferson National Forest.

The forest controlled the crest of the Blue Ridge from a point near Buchanan, on the James River to a point just south of Waynesboro, on the Shenandoah River. It protected the heads of the Staunton, James and Potomac Rivers.

The ranger's office was upstairs over the first 5 and 10 cent store owned by Bruce Patterson. From about 1935 until 1975 the office was in the basement of the Post Office Building on Forest Avenue in Buena Vista.

The Pedlar office moved again in 1975 when it rented an office building from Wilford Ramsey at 2424 Magnolia Avenue.

In 1925, the districts on the Natural Bridge National Forest were realigned. The forest supervisor's office was moved to Lynchburg, and Harold M. Sears became the supervisor.

An odd addition was made to the Natural Bridge National Forest in 1927-1928 when a military group was attached. In 1927, the land at Fort Humphries came under Forest Service authority.

In July 1928 the Lee Group was added to the military group and the 7,177-acre Lee Military National Forest was formed. Forest Service responsibility for this land ended by 1929.

The Pedlar District finally came into the George Washington National Forest on April 28, 1936 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a proclamation dividing what was left of the Natural Bridge National Forest and the Mountain Lake Purchase Unit between the George Washington National Forest and the newly formed Jefferson National Forest.

While the Forest Service was making major changes, the local people faced unexpected disaster when a flood swept through Buena Vista March 17, 1936.

Area homes were destroyed as water rose five to six feet in town. Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps facilities were not exempt from its fury.

Less than four months later, the Forest Service had reason to celebrate. On July 4, 1936, Pedlar District personnel opened the Sherando Lake Forest Camp in Augusta County.

The facilities were constructed by CCC enrollees from nearby Camp Sherando and transfers from Camp Woodson. When the camp was finished, about a year later, it had a 21 acre lake formed by an earthen dam, bathhouse, sand beach,

The Civilian Conservation Corps completed many projects in the Pedlar Ranger District. Above, a "spike camp" or field auxiliary camp for Camp Oranoco, one of the Pedlar CCC facilities.

picnic areas, 20 campsites with a complete water system, log picnic shelters, trails, a campfire circle and fishing facilities.

The district was involved with another recreation venture in the 1930s. This one reached national proportions.

In 1938, the Forest Service, National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conference signed an agreement to recognize the Appalachian Trail concept and to pledged to protect it.

Construction of southern portions of the Appalachian Trail began as early as 1931 and the entire trail was completed in 1937. About 60 miles of the trail wander through the Pedlar.

About 30 years later, the district again found itself dealing with natural disasters.

The early 1960s brought a renewed focus on fire suppression with several significant fires.

The C & O Railroad fire on April 4, 1963, scorched 1,137 acres before being brought under control. The fire started accidentally in a railroad right-of-way clearing. The fire took about 5,000 hours of manpower by 318 people at a cost of more than $23,000 to suppress.

Two years later on Easter Sunday (April 18, 1965) the Hellgate fire scorched 2,163 acres. The Hellgate fire was of special interest because of the rapid rate of spread early in the fire and it was characterized by running, crowning, spotting, the generation of fire whirlwinds 15 feet in diameter with 150 foot heights. Flames reached heights of 10 to 40 feet with flashes up to 60 feet.

During the 1970s, the Forest Service saw a great reduction in the size of fires,

although incendiary type fires continued to plaque firefighters.

On April 26, 1971, the Pinnacle Ridge fire caused by logging equipment scorched 370 acres. For the first time, the Forest Service used airtankers on a large scale to fight a fire in the Pedlar. Two airtankers with a lead plane helped suppress the fire.

During the dry fire season of 1986, a fire in the Pedlar received national media attention. On March 24, 1986, a fire later ruled man-caused, began to burn on the mountain at the edge of Buena Vista. It took over 200 people, helicopters, and airtankers at a cost of over $100,000 to suppress the 200-acre fire.

The media attention came because of three black bear cubs caught in the fire. The cubs were apparently abandoned by their mother when the fire drew near. Forest Service personnel rescued the cubs and later released them back into the National Forest.

The area was once again hit by flooding in August 1969 and November 1985. In 1969, Hurricane Camille dumped 27 inches of rain in the Buena Vista and Rockbridge County area. Downtown Buena Vista, Va. was damaged and the the Forest Service spent more than $480,000 to repair its facilities and roads, including $80,000 worth of damage at Sherendo Lake.

In 1985, Hurricane Juan caused extensive damage throughout the George Washington National Forest.

A part of the Pedlar Ranger District became an official piece of history, when on February 25, 1974, the Torry Furnace was entered into the National Register of Historic Places.

The furnace was built of field stone in 1800 and produced tons of brown hematite ore. It changed hands several times throughout its history, was rebuilt following destruction by union forces during the Civil War. A trespasser blasted one side of the furnace sometime during World War I for the iron castings. The remainder still stands today along Va. Highway 664 in Augusta County.

Warm Springs Ranger District

The George Washington National Forest grew by more than 400,000 acres in the 1930s causing a major new district to form: the Warm Springs.

In June 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order to spend $20 million to purchase additional forest lands in the east. This land would provide even more work for the then infant Civilian Conservation Corps.

While the forest has no specific record of how much of this money was spent in the George Washington, land records show significant purchases in this period.

Between 1935 and 1940 the forest proclamation boundary -- which defines the area where purchases and exchanges may be made -- grew by almost 900,000 acres and actual acquisitions grew by more than 400,000 acres.

Another boundary needed to be settled. Up until 1935, the Monongahela National Forest had about 10,000 in the Highland County area of Virginia. This region, known as the Laurel Forks area, was apparently purchased by that forest in a couple of 4,000 to 5,000 acre chunks around 1923.

There is no record of an actual start-up date for the Warm Springs District. However, 1935 coincides with the time that the land in the Monongahela was

shifted over to the George Washington and other major land purchases -- some ranging in size up to 16,000 acres -- were made.

This date also coincides with the first listing for a ranger in that district, Charles P. Mead, who served from Oct. 1, 1935, to Sept. 7, 1941.

Just one year later, another major boundary was defined when the Jefferson National Forest was formed to the south.

With land purchases and exchanges made throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Warm Springs District grew rapidly. By 1948, some of this land was taken and joined with land from the Jefferson National Forest to create yet another district: the James River.

Today the district has about 171,000 acres of land in Bath and Highland counties in Virginia. The Forest Service owns so much land in that area that some estimate that as much as 50 percent of Bath County, Va. is in Forest Service ownership.

Two other acquisitions have significantly affected the Warm Springs.

In 1965, the Forest Service acquired Warwickton, a 19th century plantation in Bath County near the Jackson River in an area known as Hidden Valley.

The mansion, built in 1848 by Judge James Wood Warwick, is considered one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in western Virginia.

When the Forest Service acquired the mansion, it was in disrepair. To preserve the structure, a the roof was replaced and steps were taken to discourage vandalism.

After that, Warwick Mansion sat with little change for more than 20 years while various development plans were made and rejected.

By 1990, the Forest Service had accepted a plan to allow the mansion to be turned into a bed and breakfast under a special use permit. While the George Washington still owns the mansion, Ron and Pam Stidham, formerly of Marysville, Ohio, are providing the money for repairs.

Restoration is now underway.

Another major addition to the district was Lake Moomaw. The lake was built by the Army Corps of Engineers for recreation, flood control and water quality.

Construction was started in 1965 and completed in 1981. When it was finished, 2,500 acres of water were held back by a 257-foot-tall dam across the Jackson River.

In July, 1981, the Corps of Engineers transferred responsibility for recreation on the lake over the the Forest Service. Corps of Engineers continues to maintain responsibility for flood control and water quality.

The lake is surrounded by the Warm Springs District on the north and the James River District on the south. At the Warm Springs end, the Bolar Flat Marinia was expected to open during the summer of 1991.

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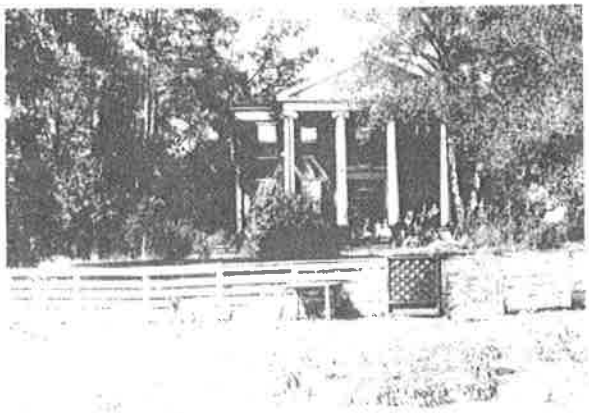

Left, this 1905 picture of Warwick Mansion shows trees growing up close to the home. The Forest Service now owns this example of Greek revival architecture in the Warm Springs Ranger District. It is being restored by private investors who will open their home as a bed and breakfast.

Forest Supervisors

The supervisor is the top administrator for the forest.

S.H. Marsh	May 16, 1918	Sept. 30, 1927
R.W. Shields	Oct. 1, 1927	Feb. 28, 1930
J.W. McNair	Mar. 1, 1930	April 30. 1935
H.L. Borden	May 1, 1935	Jan. 3, 1937
M.C. Howard	Jan. 4 1937	July 31, 1946
R.F. Hemingway	Aug. 1, 1946	April 30, 1950
E.M. Karger	May 1, 1950	Aug. 30, 1952
A.H. Anderson	1952	1965
J. O'Keefe	1966	1969
S.M. Adams	June 29, 1969	June 25, 1972
R. Cermak	1972	1974
G.M. Smith	Sept. 24, 1974	1986
G.W. Kelley	Aug. 3, 1986	present

District Rangers

The rangers are the top administrators for each district.

Deerfield Ranger District

Roy T. Reed	Aug. 1, 1916	June 30, 1920
Berlin H. Eye	July 1, 1920	Oct. 15, 1925
Walter J. Quick Jr.	Oct. 16, 1925	Aug. 1, 1927
William A. Garber	Sept. 1, 1927	Dec. 31, 1933
Meredith Leitch	Jan 1, 1934	Jan. 5, 1952
Ralph L. Rowland	Jan. 6, 1952	Nov. 23, 1963
Robert K. Strosnider	Nov. 24, 1963	Aug. 14, 1966
Leonard J.McNeal	Aug. 28, 1966	Aug. 28, 1976
John W. Coleman	Sept. 26, 1976	Feb. 24, 1979
Stephen N. Schlobohm	May 6, 1979	April 3 1982
James D. Thorsen	June 27, 1982	April 26, 1986
David A. Rhodes	May 25, 1986	present

Dry River Ranger District

North River

A.J. Shifflette	Aug. 11, 1916	Oct. 20, 1917
S.M. Shankin	Oct. 21, 1917	April 15, 1920
J.W. Bowman	April 16, 1920	Dec. 31, 1922
D.K. Hendee	Feb. 16, 1923	Oct. 24, 1925
A.C. Dahl	Feb. 10 1926	June 30, 1927
Gilbert Y. Bell	July 1, 1927	June 30, 1928
W. R. Paddock	July 1, 1928	Dec. 31, 1928

Brocks Gap

Arthur A. Wood	July 1, 1924	Oct. 15, 1925
Berlin H. Eye	Oct. 16, 1925	June 30, 1928
Abner Casey	July 1, 1928	Dec. 31, 1928

Dry River

Abner Casey	Jan. 1, 1929	Oct. 31, 1946
Richard E. Elliott	Nov. 1, 1946	July 14 1956

William W. Wentz	July 15 1956	May 31, 1958
H.H. Bush	June 1, 1958	Oct. 31, 1969
Raymond K. Mason	Jan. 25, 1970	July 17, 1976
George H. Blomstrom	Aug. 29, 1976	June 18, 1988
Buddie Risner	July 17, 1988	present

James River Ranger District

Richard F. Haussman	June 1, 1948	Aug. 6, 1949
John H. Noyes	Aug. 7, 1949	Nov. 26, 1955
George E. Nietzold	Nov. 27, 1955	Jan 10, 1959
Robert E. Lockhart	Feb. 8, 1959	Sept. 16, 1961
Richard J. Schultz	Sept. 17, 1961	July 21, 1962
Robert E. Lockhart	July 22, 1962	April 10, 1965
Richard J. Obyc	April 11, 1965	July 13, 1968
Billy E. Page	July 14, 1968	March 18, 1972
Charles F. L. VonHerrmann, III	March 19, 1972	Feb. 25, 1978
William B. Leichter	Feb. 26, 1978	Oct. 31, 1990
Cindy Snow	Feb. 11, 1991	present

Lee District Ranger District

Lost River District

Arthur A. Wood	May 1, 1917	June 30, 1924
John F. Keckley	July 1, 1924	June 30, 1932

Massanutten District

William H. Stoneburner	May 1, 1917	June 30, 1920
John W. Crisman	July 1, 1920	June 30, 1932

Lee District

John W. Crisman	July 1, 1932	June 30, 1949
Clinton E. Meredith (acting)	July 1, 1949	Aug. 31, 1949
Richard F. Haussman	Sept. 1, 1949	Jan. 4, 1952
Bernard A. Eger	Jan. 5, 1952	July 31, 1960
John M. Hiner	Aug. 1, 1960	Sept. 15, 1962
Patrick J. Sheehan	Sept. 15, 1962	Feb. 27, 1965
Lewis J. Beyea	Feb. 28, 1965	Sept. 4, 1971
Charles D. Huppuch	Sept. 5, 1971	Dec. 17, 1978
John W Coleman	Feb. 25, 1979	present

Pedlar Ranger District

William E. Hedges	March 8, 1916	May 1, 1917
Thomas A. Wilson	May 1, 1917	July 16, 1927;
Thomas W. McKinley	July 1, 1927	March 5, 1930
F. Henry Sipe	April 1, 1930	Oct. 15, 1930
Frank A. Albert	Oct. 19, 1930	Dec. 31, 1930
William L. Maule	Jan. 1, 1931	June 30, 1932
Allen R. Cochran	Oct. 2, 1932	April 25, 1935
Benjamin L. Lucas	April 26, 1935	Oct. 31, 1935
George P. Kramer	Nov. 1, 1935	June 30, 1939
Bernard A. Eger	July 1, 1939	March 19, 1952
William H. Cole	March 20, 1952	Nov. 15, 1962
Ben W. Fenton	Nov. 16, 1962	June 27, 1970
Stanley W. Kunzman	July 12, 1970	Aug. 17, 1974
Ruben M. Williams	Aug. 18, 1974	Oct. 8, 1978
Frank W. Gottbrath	Nov. 8, 1978	July 21, 1984
James A. Hunt	Aug. 5, 1984	present

Warm Springs District

Charles P. Mead	Oct. 1, 1935	Sept. 7, 1941
Herbert E. Adams	Sept. 8, 1941	Sept. 20, 1943
Richard F. Haussman	Oct. 18, 1943	May 29, 1948
John R. Hicks	May 30, 1948	Feb. 16, 1957
John M. Hiner	Feb. 17, 1957	July 31, 1960
Ronald M. Pyle, Jr.	Sept. 9, 1960	Jan. 21, 1962
L. Stanley Freese, Jr. (act)	Jan 22, 1962	April 28, 1962
Walter A. Guerrero	April 29, 1962	Aug. 25, 1968
Stanley W. Kunzman, Jr.	Sept. 22, 1968	July 12, 1970
Gerard Jacques	Aug. 23 1970	Aug. 28, 1977
Victor H. Gaines	Sept. 25, 1977	present

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NATIONAL FORESTS

1891-1991

The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is dedicated to the principle of multiple use management of the Nation's forest resources for sustained yields of wood, water, forage, wildlife, and recreation. Through forestry research, cooperation with the States and private forest owners, and management of the National Forests and National Grasslands, it strives—as directed by Congress—to provide increasingly greater service to a growing Nation.